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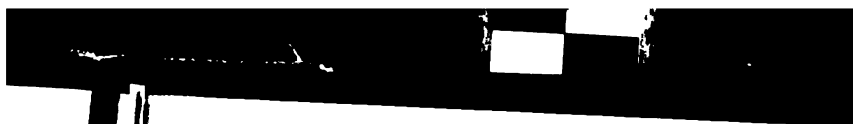
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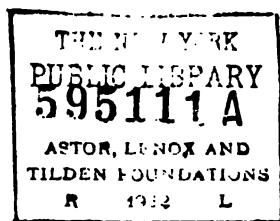


A WOMAN IN REVOLT

BY
ANNIE LEE

*Arthur H. Hays
New York - Dec-16-1913*

New York
Desmond FitzGerald, Inc.



Replacing copy, 673325

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To the Memory of

PRINCE A. MORROW, M.D.,

*whose fearless and untiring labors in the
field of sex hygiene have conferred an ines-
timable benefit upon the race.*

27 X 685



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I

THE room was unlighted save by the stars and the myriad lights of the city framed by the big studio window. Upon its many-cushioned seat lounged a man, smoking, and looking out at the horizon, where a spangled heaven bent to a glittering earth and the sense of their difference was lost.

"The lights are wonderful to-night, Claire. To my mind, Paris on the Fourteenth of July isn't in it with New York from this window every night in the week. It's immense!—gives one such a feeling of the millions of people all about one that I should think it would keep you from ever feeling lonely."

There was no response from the dimly outlined figure of the woman at the piano, unless it was that the vague theme upon which she had been improvising suddenly took definite form in the reiterated, insistent wail of Schumann's *F sharp Sonata*, ceasing for an instant at the climax of the first movement, then changing into the Chopin *Storm Étude* with its no less

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insistent note of power and wild, irresistible revolt.

"Gad, but you do that superbly!" said the man, rising and drawing a chair nearer to the piano. "Let's have the *Liebestod*; you are in just the mood for it to-night."

Her hands fell into her lap and she turned towards him as if to speak, but only a quick sigh escaped her, and turning to the piano again, her fingers alone spoke—the wistful, questioning, feminine plea preluding Isolde's peerless song. With clinging touch, softly, canorously, she began the theme bespeaking the love that is all-giving tenderness and the resignation that is sorrow without hope, broken into by the reminiscent theme of love's joy ending in a sob; when, as if rebellion were born of memory too poignantly, agonizingly sweet, tumultuous, panting protest rings out stronger and stronger, until in pulsating, broken cadences it swells and bursts into its heart-broken cry of infinite yearning and despairing impotence. The repeated crescendo ended in a dissonant crash as the man jumped from his chair, pinioning her arms, and raining passionate kisses upon her mouth. Struggling to free herself, she gasped:

"Let me go! Let me go! do you hear? I am not in *that* mood. Oh, why can you *never* feel as I do?"

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He released her, saying irritably, "I can do nothing to please you of late. Will you tell me why everything I do seems to make you unhappy?"

"It would be of no use," she answered, wearily. "You wouldn't understand."

"Don't you think you owe it to me to try and make me?"

"I suppose so—if I can. But first, will *you* tell *me* why you ever told me that you loved me?"

"I suppose because I do."

"You don't know what love means."

"And what right have *you* to believe that you know any more than I?"

"Only because I am a woman, and because women mature younger than men. Added to which," with a sad little laugh, "I've cried more than you have—not, perhaps, that I've had so much more to cry about, but because I've had so much more time to think about it."

"Will you believe me, Claire," reaching for her hand, "if I tell you that I've tried to love you as you love me?"

She evaded his grasp so that he did not feel her quiver. Controlling herself with an effort, she asked: "Will you tell me why you find me so unlovable?"

"Ah, you know that isn't so! But I don't

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understand it myself—you seem so sweet and lovely to me—so——”

He hesitated and she took it up, her voice now cold and hard. “Of course, the beauty of my soul you found so great as to make your own character seem ugly, warped and misshapen—or was it undeveloped you said?”

“I don’t remember; either would be true.”

“And what other wondrous, transcendent qualities do I possess? Oh, yes, so nearly a saint am I at times that no one could be with me without being helped and made better by it. I make all other women seem better to you for having known me. Added to which, I possess a rare intelligence, a superb fearlessness, moral as well as mental, more than one exceptional talent, an exquisite imagination and wit, a great heart and a sweet intensity of nature that, from the very first, made you feel that we were closely akin—must have been so in another incarnation—— But why go on? for, of course, it’s not for such reasons that one loves another.”

“Oh, *why* won’t you believe me! I do love you deeply and truly; and your beautiful friendship fills me with wonder and awe.”

“Friendship!” she echoed, bitterly. “It has never been friendship that you’ve wanted from me. To be sure it was unconscionably stupid of me not to know that when you said

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love you meant something else; to have believed that a man would scorn to ask and take from a woman more than he was willing to give; particularly when she had told him how she would consider his taking that, which you know as well as I, is no more friendship than it is—prostitution.”

“ You are merciless.”

“ No, only pursuing truth—as always a bewildering process. But please let me go on, and perhaps you can help me out of the fog into which I’ve wandered—of course, entirely through my own lack of perspicacity. It’s not as if I were an ingénue. I suppose I’ve had as many men tell me they loved me as most women of my age. And one of them did know what love meant: he really loved his mother. Each of them kissed my instep. You, too, liked my pretty slippers, and told me that nothing helped a man like the faith of a good woman. If you men would only vary this last now and then! Can you tell me why I neither wanted to kick you for the one nor laugh at you for the other, as I did with the rest? ” Receiving no reply, she continued, “ Perhaps it was because you had what the others hadn’t—a clean, strong mouth; and through it I came to have faith:—‘ the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen.’ And how have you requited that faith? By——”



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“ Will you never understand that I forgot the criterion you had set? ” he broke in impatiently.

“ Forgot! ” her scorn rang out. “ What business had you to forget? ”

“ It was because you were so unhappy—that night of the storm; and I felt sorry for you. ”

Shrinking from his shifting gaze, her own lids falling to hide it, she said: “ And it was pity, forsooth, that made you—— ” Her voice broke and she paused to steady it, then began again. “ It’s a man’s pity, is it, that takes advantage of a woman’s love and longing to give to him, to make her the plaything of his passions; to lie to her; to kill all her joy and pride in him and her own self-respect? ”

“ And I repeat, ” he tried to defend himself, “ that I do love you. ”

“ I beg of you not to repeat it. If you are really so obtuse as to continue to deceive yourself thus, I no longer am. ”

“ Then if what I feel for you isn’t love, what is it? ”

“ It’s only wanting. You never meant anything; I meant everything and gave everything. Taking without giving isn’t love—it’s a cruel wrong. But the greatest wrong of all was that lie, your first kiss—ininitely more cowardly than words, for a kiss you could call pity. ”

“ Of course, if you won’t believe that I for-

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got, there's no use of my saying anything more," and he turned sullenly towards the window.

She rose and paced the room several times in silence, then returned to her seat. "Listen, Dick, and I'll try and make you see what you've done. Even if you did forget my exact words, it made little difference in your responsibility to me. My foreign training had taught me to call spades spades. We had talked often and plainly enough for you to know that I couldn't give the—any physical demonstration without the spiritual; that passion without love I considered bestial. As you know, I thought that love alone could hallow it; but what you call love has taught me that only one thing justifies it—the perpetuation of the race. But that wasn't what I wanted to say," passing her hand across her forehead; "it's this: When I came into my life, I had no ties, no obligations, was responsible to no one but myself. You knew that no preconceived moral precepts constrained me unless I myself found them good; that I acknowledged no crime but meanness, nothing undeserving of pardon but the lie that injures another. I set up but one defense against you—to tell you that a kiss, whether given or received, meant to me a pledge of love. After that you gave me this pledge, as well as said you loved me; and I believed you. No doubt

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of you ever crossed my mind until that hideous night I met you at the theater, after you'd told me you couldn't get up to town. It's unnecessary to go over the rest. Ere long, I knew that for my unconditional surrender *you* could give me only the lie and the meanness: the two things of all others I most abhorred. And it's this—this knowledge that such things can be, that will follow me, I think, till I die, with its bitterness and shattered faith. This is the wrong you have done me while I—I would have given you my life to use or sacrifice as it might best serve you." As she ceased speaking, a muffled sound made her look up to see the man's head buried in the cushions of the window-seat, while another stifled sob broke from him. An instant and she was beside him, her hand upon his head.

"Don't! Don't, Dick! I can't bear it."

"Everything you say is true," he acknowledged; "I've been a brute. But you won't give me up now, will you, Claire? You've taught and helped me so much; don't let me go now." Pleading for her mercy, his head upon her breast, she could only hold it there while he faltered: "You are too good to me, far too good; I don't deserve it."

"Perhaps not," she answered, sadly; "but—well, you see, I have the hope always before me that some day you will."

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“ God bless you for that! And you will believe me, won't you, when I tell you that you are dearer to me now than ever before? ”

“ I think it's better that I shouldn't think of that at all, only of how I can help you. The other makes me selfish, and then I do you no good. I want you to go now, Dick; I'm very tired.”

She kissed him lightly on the forehead, and he left her with bowed head; as kneeling to a something veiled and sanctified, which he did not understand and soon forgot.



II

THE French coast was rapidly receding from view, the Cherbourg passengers settling themselves on deck, and the others, those who had come aboard at Hamburg or Southampton, eyeing them with a something far more hostile than cordial; the regret being too acute, as yet, for the chairs that had been so conveniently empty. Claire had chosen hers in one of the single rows aft. Her two immediate neighbors were a girl, who looked silly and was chattering with a Jap, and a man, who looked intellectual and—she thanked heaven for it—was not chattering but buried in a book. She opened her own, but the vanishing coast, suggesting the imminence of home, brought a flood of memories so overwhelming that, closing her eyes, she gave herself up to them so completely that the exodus for dinner practically cleared the deck without arousing her attention. She was living over again that last evening with Dick Wall, her sudden determination to spend the summer in Europe and refusal to see him again before sailing, followed by four months' aimless wandering through Tirol and Switzer-

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land in the futile effort to forget him, resulting only in an indecision of longing and bitterness. Homesick, she knew not for what; an alien in Europe, an expatriate in New York— At this point in her reflections she was startled into a perceptible jump by a voice close beside her, saying,

“ Pardon me, but can’t I order something for you? You look ill, and none of the deck stewards seem to be coming this way.” Then, with a winning smile, “ I’m a doctor, and it’s my business to look after sick people, you know.”

She recognized her neighbor, whose intelligent face and cultivated voice were unmistakably those of a gentleman, so she summoned a civil “ Thank you, I’m not ill, only fatigued; and do not want anything, as I had tea on the tender.”

“ Ah, I see,” leaning over to pick up his book. With which he too went in search of dinner; and what he saw had been a vast deal more of her true condition, pathologically, than Claire had any idea of herself.

At first she had thought that she was annoyed at having to speak to anyone. Then she looked at the card on the next chair, inscribed *Doctor Rathbone*, and was glad of her neighbor—so she reasoned—because he had a good name, was a gentleman, and would not talk to



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her if she did not want him to. But the note of human kindness and sympathy had gone on its unerring course to the sore heart and tired brain.

Had John Rathbone any doubts as to his diagnosis they would have been dispelled the next morning, when, coming out on deck, he saw her leaning wearily against the rail with unchanged expression: and upon such a morning! The air was more stimulating than wine and the sea, reflecting sun and sky, an unfathomable indigo. A fresh wind, brushing off the crest of each wave that shimmered into a glittering rainbow, was driving them one after the other in mad pursuit—a glad, rollicking chase with the porpoises bounding into the air in joyous escape. The whole glorious world of ocean was in its most enticing mood, and the man's responded to it with all the vigor of his healthy mind and body. "Poor girl," he pitied, "she is indeed ill when this brings her no joy." So ill was she in fact that the perfect beauty and harmony of the day only accentuated her misery; and, with the craving so constant with her now for something—anything to keep her from thinking, she wandered into the library. Cross' *Life of George Eliot* suggesting a theme that would not play upon her overwrought emotions, she took it back to her chair and tried, in assuming absorption, to gain it,

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particularly as she had seen Doctor Rathbone approaching. He, having taken in the situation at a glance, smiled as he took his seat; which, by some subtle means of telepathy, may have been communicated to her, for she suddenly realized, if not the childishness, at least the discourtesy of which she had been so nearly guilty, and, looking up, offered a "Good-morning."

A most genial one came in reply with, "I'm glad you thought better of it."

"Thought better of what?" she hazarded; uncomfortably conscious of its stupidity, as she had not only understood but knew that he knew that she had.

"Believe me, I won't make you talk to me if you don't want to," he evaded her question in so kindly a tone and with so mischievous an expression that between annoyance, chagrin, and contrition, she all but floundered. Contrition saved her, however.

"Please," she begged, "don't think me unappreciative of your kindness last evening, nor so fatuous as to think it other than wholly impersonal and disinterested."

"Spoken like a little man! That absolves you quite. And now I'll cease from troubling and let you go back to your book." With which he opened his own, leaving her feeling very much like an admonished child; liking him for

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his unreserved frankness and, at the same time, longing to box his ears for making her appear so silly. Now quite unable to forget him for George Eliot, because of her too vivid consciousness of his proximity, vanity began to protest vigorously against his unmistakable unconsciousness of hers; the rapid turning of his leaves attesting to an absorption not assumed, and unbroken until the steward thrust his tray of bouillon at him. Refusing it, he was preparing to become reabsorbed when, seeing Claire reach for a cup, he took one and handed it to her.

“ Hungry? ”

“ Not particularly.”

“ Then why do you take it? ”

“ Natural perversity of woman, I suppose—or more likely to pass the time.”

“ Most likely,” he followed her up, “ an unholy ignorance of hygiene. If you left that bouillon alone you might, you know, be hungry by lunch time. And this afternoon will you, to pass the time again, repeat this process of appetite-annihilation by that abomination of women’s habits, tea, and so ruin your chances for dinner? ”

“ Probably. But I’m hardly ever hungry, in any case, so it makes little difference whether I take it or not.”

“ And did it never occur to you that, if you

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refrained from eating when you were not hungry and waited until you were, you might get an appetite? "

" Yes; but, mostly, one just eats automatically because food is set before one."

" Do you realize that that is to acknowledge yourself a mere puppet of circumstance? "

" I suppose I am one; most of us are," she answered so meekly that she wondered at herself. There was something compelling about this big man with his gratuitous sympathy and advice; his sweeping aside of the polite for the real; a ring of sincerity that soothed her inexpressibly.

" Perhaps," he agreed, " but, somehow—through natural egotism, doubtless—I'd hate to acknowledge myself one until I'd put up a somewhat better fight for it than you are putting up for an appetite. Which reminds me that I owe a walk to my own. Exercise is a good coaxer, you know," he added, rising and standing before her.

" Is that a suggestion or an invitation? " she questioned.

" Whichever your ladyship chooses to accept. To unqualifiedly offer the last, after the forbidden territory sign you hung out this morning, I'd hardly dare," all the while taking off her rug.

She rose, laughing. " Do all your patients

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obey you as meekly as I? And as for your 'dare'—the word, implying fear, had, I should say, no place in your vocabulary, in that you feared neither God nor man, much less woman."

"As to the last," he smiled back, "no mere, miserable man ever had greater reverence for, and faith in, the eternal feminine than I. And is one apt to fear what one both admires and believes in?"

"Then, inversely, you do fear what you neither can understand nor believe in?" Giving him no time to answer, she continued, "And I'm sure you can't do either with a woman who deliberately refuses to obey your sacred laws of hygiene. Thus, by all logical deduction, you should fear me; which conclusion your last remark might confirm, for it was no answer at all to my challenge, only rank hedging."

"O shades of Socrates and Mill! what say you to such woman's logic? I did *not* grant your premise, you took it for granted; so, by all logical deduction, your whole conclusion is wrong. But away with polemics this glorious morning! Let's talk of something more in accord with it. What beautiful things have you seen this summer?"

"The Alps."

"Hm! concise and to the point. But do the green valleys and snow peaks of Switzerland inspire no more enthusiasm in you than that?"

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"I've been there so much."

"Even so. I think were I to live among them, it would be but to acquire an ever-deepening sense of their beauty."

"Of course; but one doesn't always feel in rhapsodizing mood."

"True. Been over long?"

"Only since May—this time."

"Have there been so many other times?"

"I've lived in Europe a good deal. I was at school in Paris and Dresden, and then several years in Vienna."

"So you know dear old Vienna? That's one of my stalking grounds too. Needless to say, my prey was the evasive microbe. What was yours in that alluring capital of the Hapsburgs—piano?"

"Yes. Do you care for music—does it say anything to your head, I mean?"

"It ought to. My mother was an exceptionally good amateur, and I was brought up on it; whistled Beethoven at ten. Does that admit me to sit with the elect in your audience?"

"Perhaps, when I have one."

"Aren't you doing it professionally?"

"No."

"That's a pity."

"And why, pray?"

"Because amateur ambitions generally fail of achieving what the professional so often

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might. And last, though anything but least, what next to health, can you tell me, is a more valuable possession than a profession? "

" Never having had one, I couldn't say."

" Better try it." Receiving no reply, he added: " Do you think, for a stranger, I'm taking outrageous liberties? Forgive me for presuming to be interested. But there goes the call for lunch, and you can escape me if you like."

" Thank you,—and also for making me walk. The air certainly is delicious this morning."

" I'm glad you find it so, now," he answered; leaving her wondering what he had meant by the " now."

After lunch she tried to rest; but, obsessed as she was by the haunting, unanswerable questions to which she became a prey in every unoccupied hour, it was a futile quest; and for the hundredth time since finding it in the saloon the day before, she began reading the letter forwarded to her from her bankers. It was dated:

PINEHURST, N. J.,

September 15th.

DEAR CLAIRE:

Where are you to-night, I wonder, and when are you coming home? You must not think because I have taken so long to answer your sweet letter that I am not thinking of you; but I have been very busy up to two weeks ago when the boss, to my amazement, told me I was to get a two weeks' vacation. Pretty decent of him, don't you think? I think he feels sorry for me. He's not very much older than I and

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been practicing for twelve years now, and when I think that I might have been, too—for three or four—had I had the nerve to get to work for it sooner, it makes me wild. But better late than never! I'm an LL.B. at last, and still not so old that if I don't win out it will be anyone's fault but my own.

I've been enjoying my rest at home so much, not to mention the relief of getting away from Trenton for awhile, which is never the coolest of cities, but this summer it has been fierce. To-night we are having the most awful storm, the wind is howling and the rain dashing against the window and, as always, it makes me feel very close to you. I know, too, that you are with me in spirit.

Good-night. I must go over to the church for Father, who started off for the service before the storm came up with no extras but his sermon under his arm. Mother has a headache and has gone to bed, and the girls are away on a visit.

Let me know when you expect to get home, and believe me
lovingly as always,

DICK.

Again she devoured the lines for some little evidence of love, of real interest, even. After having written him in detail of her sailing and the probable day of the ship's arrival, he was asking when she was to return! The commonplaceness of the letter she did not notice; but its indifference chilled her longing to rebellion, and protest after protest rose from a swelling heart until broken in upon by the stewardess, coming to ask her if she would like a cup of tea. This brought a smile in recollection of the arraignment this soothing beverage, so dear to the palate of woman, had received earlier in the day. She certainly wanted it, but the pres-

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once the mental picture conjured up of the arraigner's vigorous personality made her refuse it, and, somehow, feel better for the thought of him. Suddenly sitting up, she said: "Where are you, George Eliot? I *will* read you!" which brought back the stewardess, hardly out of the corridor, only to hurriedly take herself off again, thinking the *Fräulein* quite mad because she laughed so strangely and said she was only talking to George Eliot, when there was no one anywhere about.

The cry of the hungry heart of this same George Eliot finally claimed her attention until dinner time; after which, finding a quiet corner in the saloon, she read on until the steward came in to put out the lights, which sent her on deck for some air.

Behind a silver-rimmed cloud the moon was casting its reflection upon the water, creating an effect so weirdly lovely that she watched breathlessly for it to appear. As it seemed to glide from out the clouds' embrace she heaved a deep sigh.

"It almost hurts, doesn't it?" said John Rathbone's voice behind her.

"Yes: I wonder why," she answered, without turning.

Leaning his elbows upon the rail beside her, he mused for an instant. "Perhaps it is because the moon's fires have all burned out, and

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its seemingly beautiful serenity points an aching contrast to the restless, feverish struggle of human life. The moon might well have served the ancient Brahmins as an emblem of Nirvana."

"Does that appeal to you?" she questioned.

"It has, in years gone by, at times of illness or discouragement."

"Why not Paradise?" she ventured.

He did not answer immediately, then put a counter-question. "Does it appeal to you?"

"No, because I can't believe in it; though I sometimes envy those who do, it seems to bring them so much comfort."

"'Tis only a sugar-pill remedy that allays present pain with fatuous hope. Think how utterly weary and bored we should become of having every desire gratified and nothing left to strive for. Then, too, it always seemed to me a poor sort of righteousness that struggles for reward."

"To be sure. But even if one struggles only for peace of mind and self-respect, that is aiming at reward too."

"The very best; that of those splendid old Antonines—*æquanimitas*. But does not the certitude of rightfulness of this reward lie in the fact that it stimulates and inspires, as certainly as that the rewards of Paradise (synonymous

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to the prevalent conception of happiness:—gratification of all desire) would produce stagnation, which is death? Has it ever seemed to you wellnigh incredible that, for so many centuries, men could fail to grasp the childish inconsistency of making self-sacrifice the ideal in a world where ‘there is no health in us,’ and all-comprehensive self-gratification that of a heaven where all is love? ”

“ I never thought of it in that way. You make it seem hideous.”

“ I’d hardly call it that; rather is it pitiful that for so long man could—and the nineteenth century having come and gone, still can—through his craving for longer life and the ideal state which he has never found here, thus parody love; dwarf his own possibilities; and blind himself to the fact that he creates his own immortality, for good or for ill, by his own genius.”

“ Ah, but how many of us possess genius? ”

“ I believe that each one of us does; that it is but the potentiality—the truth that lies in the head, heart, or hand of every human being, ever waiting, striving, pleading for expression, if we will but listen to its voice. To give it form—that is genius; and it is to live!—as man’s god-like qualities are prophetic of his ultimate ability to live.” The man’s eyes, reflecting the glint of the silvered sea, shone pityingly upon

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the woman's face set hopelessly towards the dark horizon, and some silver crept into his voice as he finished. "And the only tragedy is a wasted life."

Six bells struck and the call rang out from the man in the crow's nest. Excepting a steward stacking chairs aft, the deck was empty of all save themselves. The loneliness of great spaces and witchery of the night cast over them the spell of reality; the barriers of evasion or pretense going down before the challenge of brain to heart, made by sympathy tender as a caress. Stranger though he was, she realized that this man divined her pain and was offering her consolation; at which she not only felt no resentment but a childish longing to succumb to the lump in her throat, just to be comforted. But she had struggled too hard to do without sympathy to make the plea for it now other than weak capitulation; and he was making it too perilously easy. Realizing that her only safety lay in flight, without excuse, she hastily offered her hand and a good-night. He clasped it warmly, wishing her in return a restful sleep; leaving her grateful and bewildered.

To shrink from men was coming to be an instinct with her. From their non-comprehension and "the pursuit" she was learning to defend herself; but this was a new problem:—a man



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who apparently wanted nothing of her but to give her something, and who not only did not misunderstand her speech, but seemed able to read her very thought. It was too novel; her brain too fagged.

III

His greeting in the morning was as unembarrassed and matter-of-fact as if the night had not bewitched them into a mutual revelation of innermost things. With an instant's keen scrutiny of her face, while tucking her into her rug, he said:

"Is it natural perversity of this particular woman that makes her look rested, with a sea on that has prostrated most of the other women on board?"

"Perhaps; more likely because I slept. But why, you arrogant man, am I more perverse than you for not being seasick? I wonder if you're also as heartless about it as I. I'm always so hideously glad when—well, the deck's as it is now."

He looked down the rows of empty chairs with responsive grin. "It certainly is more restful, and gives one a sense of more breathing, not to mention walking space." His tone changing to mock severity, "But you *are* heartless, Miss. As a youngster, during one entire, awful, unforgettable voyage I was sick; so I know what our miserable fellow-passengers are

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suffering. Our poor little Japanese has been having an awful time of it. His cabin is directly opposite mine, and he wakened me at three A.M. with a series of heathenish wails and mutterings that fairly made my blood run cold. While trying to make out if it were prayer or profanity, I heard some of the last in good hoosier American, then a grunt like a stuck pig, followed by several gasps and utter silence. Whereupon I went to the rescue: none too soon, either, as a powerful, bucolic gentleman from Arizona was hurling—pretty nearly everything he could lay his hands on into the upper berth; from which I unearthed an almost suffocated Nippon count, if you please, and a very ill man."

"Poor little Jap! I hope it's not serious, is it?" she asked.

"Sufficiently so to keep him in his berth for the rest of the voyage. He told me that he was going to New York to study at Columbia. I fear he won't have a too cheerful time of it there; for he hasn't an atom of humor—our sort—and the boys will make his life miserable."

"He'll just be one more of the pathetic aliens of which all world-capitals are full."

"Know what it feels like?"

"Find yourself, at the age of sixteen, stranded in a French boarding-school, not know-

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ing a word of the language, and ask me if I know! ”

“ And was that the experience of this poor little girl? ”

“ Yes; and she always feels very sorry for herself when she thinks of it,” laughed Claire.

“ And how did she happen to get there? But here I am impertinently asking questions again. Say so if you think I am.”

“ I will: but I’ve not the slightest objection to telling you of my boarding-school days, if it would interest you.”

“ It would, very much. But first tell me, if you don’t mind, how you happened there.”

“ For the very simple reason that my uncle, and guardian, put me there. Poor uncle! Hating and dreading nothing quite so much as a petticoat—unless it be America, to which he has not been back since he took me away from it thirteen years ago—he found himself with a girl on his hands to train and educate. In despair he looked up a boarding-school in Paris—the one city fit to live in, according to him, and where he does live—and there I spent three years.”

“ And then? ”

“ Then I was three more years at school in Dresden.”

“ And after that? ”

“ I went to Vienna to study music.”

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“ That was just about five years after I was there. Didn’t you enjoy it? And how long did you stay? ”

“ For five winters. Yes, I did enjoy it. But I never really took root there, any more than in Paris or Dresden; and it grew tiresome making friends that lived in all quarters of the globe, who were constantly going out of one’s life, most of them for good.”

“ Yes, that’s one of the drawbacks of student life abroad.” A something constrained in his tone made her look up to catch an expression that held her glance, so old and sad did it make his face appear. Forcing a smile, he continued: “ And now you are anchored in your own country, where friends don’t take themselves off to the Antipodes—at least for good? ”

“ I certainly feel more at home in New York, though I have not many friends there. One doesn’t make new ones as readily as one goes on in life, do you think so?—at any rate, I don’t. Then,” with a rueful laugh, “ there is another drawback about Continental life—a too prolonged one—which is that one finds one’s whole point of view so different from the prevalent American one that one grows hysterical over even discussing anything more important than the weather. One gets so weary of being thought queer. Most of my relations are not at all convinced that I’m quite respectable and

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certain that most of my European friends are scandalously disreputable. So I don't see much of my family, either, excepting one dear, old brick of a cousin; who is a trained nurse, by the way, and a person of whom you'd entirely approve, even though she adores tea."

He acknowledged the cousin with a smile, and then disposed of her by asking, "Have you no brothers or sisters?"

"No, I'm quite alone in the world. And now it's my turn to ask questions."

"Fire away!—only you must allow me the same privilege I did you, of telling you when they are impertinent."

"I'd hate that; so suppose you just autobiographize a bit."

"Well, no less than you, at a tender—more truly, a tough age, being a boy, I went to a 'prep.' school, from which I graduated into Harvard. From there I went to the P. and S. and, after three years on the other side, came back to New York to hang out my shingle. My present domicile is in West Fifty-third Street, where I live with a pal of mine who looks after people's nerves, while I—cut them up."

"And who keeps house for you?"

"Martha—and Mike the tyrant," he added, smiling.

"And who might they be?"

"Our housekeeper and Marlitt's bull-terrier."



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We—Marlitt and I—are to Martha what Martha is to Mike: abject slaves. The love that poor woman wastes on that dog is a crime.”

“ I suppose you think she should be lavishing it on children of her own,” came from Claire so acridly that it was his turn to scan her face; and to the tone, rather than the words, he replied:

“ Not at all; on Marlitt and me. So large a part of each day does she spend holding Mike’s paw, taking Mike to walk, preparing special delicacies to tempt Mike’s perverted appetite, that our clothes more often than not go unmended, our rooms undusted, and our meals served when it pleases her highness the cook. Ever notice that an amorous obsession makes a woman, inherently the soul of order, forget to keep her servants up to the mark? ” Receiving no answer, he concluded, “ Well, that’s Martha’s complaint, and one sad day Mike’s will be an enlarged liver.”

During the storm which continued through three days with unabated force, it would have been wellnigh impossible for them to have avoided one another, even had they so desired; the close air of the saloons and smoking-room being conducive to headache, their side of the deck the only possible one for comfort, and this so deserted, for the most part, that to occupy

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other chairs than their own would have been a too ostensible avoidance: so that what began as a partially enforced intimacy, ere the last day of the voyage, had developed into a spontaneous and easy comradeship. As, upon her last lap, the ship sped up The Narrows, they stood together by the rail, watching the green shores of Staten Island. In the mind of each was a regret that the voyage was so nearly over; he for his ended holiday; she for the dread of the monotony and emptiness ahead; and both that the quiet seclusion and pleasant, uninterrupted companionship was already a thing of the past: the rest of the passengers, clothed and in their right stomachs, being ubiquitously and noisily in evidence once more. As the chattering girl behind them was pouring a detailed account of her agonies of the last few days into the ear of the poor little Jap, still too weak to be interested in any woes but his own, Rathbone looked down at Claire with eyes almost affectionate in their kindness and interest, and said:

“ Well, *gnädiges Fräulein*, are you glad to be within your native shores once more? ”

“ I don't know—I mean it doesn't make much difference.”

“ But it's going to,” he gently remonstrated. “ Let's see. This is the middle of September. With two—or will you need three months' prac-

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tice to get in concert trim?—and then to the Steinways for a contract.”

She smiled wearily. “The very thought of such a thing makes me want to sit down.”

“It’s true you’re not in physical trim—yet. I wish you’d let Marlitt take you in hand. Your nerves need looking after; and there’s none better at them in New York than he.”

“Nonsense! I’m not ill at all, only—tired.”

“Exactly!” His tone, as of being amused at the vagaries and follies of a child, which he had come to assume more often than pleased her self-love, brought a frown that made him add, tentatively, “Officious again, am I? But not so much so, I hope, as to deprive me of a welcome when I come knocking at the door of your eyrie above the roofs: for I’m coming, you know.”

“Indeed I hope you will, and as often as you have time and inclination. Do you know that you have done me a lot of good? I think you are the—how shall I express it?—all-round healthiest person I’ve ever known: and it rubs off.”

“*Do you know* that you please me mightily by saying just that? But I shall not feel that I merit it until——”

“There comes the Revenue Cutter,” she interrupted him, “and it behooves me to go down

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and finish my declaration. See you on the dock."

After her baggage had been examined, he secured her a cab; thanked her warmly for having made the disagreeable voyage pass all too quickly for him; warned her that he would come investigating those nerves as soon as he could get through two months' accumulated exigencies; and, with a hearty "*auf Wiedersehen*," left her to get the Jap, whose weak knees would hardly support him. Her last glimpse of him was with his arm crooked under the little yellow man's; suggesting a big, shaggy Newfoundland carrying a black-and-tan terrier.

The sudden transition from a great ship and pure sea air to a Hoboken ferryboat, West Street, and the general staleness of New York in September, is hardly exhilarating at best; but to Claire's sinking spirits it seemed the abomination of desolation. To her beauty-loving eyes, within a week of Paris, the great, spirally-sprawling city appeared in the light of an unforgivable æsthetic turpitude.

With each block the immediate past acquired a more remote perspective, until it began to seem as if all that had occurred since she left it were but a dream. Reaching The Studios, her eager inquiry at the office for letters having met with, "None for you, Miss Raymond," she was even grateful for the elevator boy's "Glad

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to see you back, Miss." Entering her rooms, she looked furtively about for the letters that might somehow have got by the office: she had been so confident of a line from Marian. But only the white-swathed furniture and pictures greeted her, gleaming so ghostlike in the dusk that they seemed to lay a cold, repellent hand upon her heart, now aching almost unbearably for a human response. Even her piano had not been sent as she had ordered. The day's work over, the big building was oppressively silent. Locking the door, and without even removing her hat, she threw herself into a chair to gaze abstractedly, first, at the empty corner where her piano was wont to stand, and then through the window at the lights jumping out more rapidly than the eye could follow. Dick Wall's comment upon them came back to her: "I should think they would keep you from ever feeling lonely." Why was she still expecting anything of him? Why had she come back, and for what? She heard the elevator door shut and steps coming down the hall. A hope seized her: perhaps he had reread her letter, learned of the ship's arrival, and come; but the steps passed on. The minor strains of a violin next broke the stillness and beat painfully upon her brain, while the roar of the city came up to her from below as the voice of fate, insistent, inexorable. The goal was reached; emptiness found.



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Why strive to reach another? It was ever the same; one so powerless in the grip of circumstance. As if in answer, from across a silvered sea, to the swish of foaming water, a contrapuntal voice took up its theme: *The only tragedy is a wasted life.*



IV

MARIAN LEIGHTON had not written because she detested writing and loved Claire. A letter, particularly her own, always seemed too utterly inadequate when one had strong and deep things to express. She would be able to leave her case in Lenox a week later; and Marian had learned to wait.

Until Claire had gone to school in France, these cousins, the children of sisters, had been playfellows, and kept up a schoolgirl correspondence until the death of Marian's father, following upon the loss of his entire fortune, and her mother's subsequent illness ending in paralysis. The paralyzed woman had lived on through four painful years; which even Marian's strong, optimistic spirit could not bear to look back upon, her tender, unwearying devotion having met with little else than a hard, bitter silence. Even a weak complaining would have been easier for the big-hearted girl to bear, whose love for her proud, beautiful mother amounted to adoration; an adoration that would admit no fault in her, not even the injustice of this mother's unconcealed prefer-

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ence for the physically lovely younger sister. She even went so far as to acknowledge it just, being unable to escape an obsessing family tradition—a heritage of beautiful grandmothers—by which poor Marian knew that she had dismally failed to profit. This had sent her to Barnard to develop the brains that she had inherited from the father who had also bequeathed her his square jaw and broad forehead. After the mother's death the rich, childless aunt with whom they had lived since the downfall of their own fortunes, had taken the two girls abroad for a year, during the summer of which Claire had joined them for a three months' sojourn in Switzerland. Marian's love had then gone out to her in a wave of passionate gratitude for being the first of her family to give her any true appreciation. The following winter the sister who maintained the family tradition was presented to New York society by worldly Aunt Julia, while Marian maintained the family nobility by refusing to be dependent upon another's charity, preferring to dispense that rare article in a hospital training school; from which she graduated the same month that the "beautiful Miss Leighton" made a "brilliant match." The next year Claire returned and furnished her rooms in The Studios; to which Marian, in the interims between her cases, was ever an eagerly welcomed guest.

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A week after Claire's arrival they were chatting in the studio: a pretty, restful room with its dull green and red tones and uncluttered spaces; the grand piano, half encircling a large palm, the book shelves, and the deep-cushioned window-seat, constituting its chief furnishings. The high window, its upper part cleverly concealed by hangings, was now letting in a flood of sunshine. "Up State" there had been a frost the night before, and the sky and Claire's restless, tapping foot testified to it. Marian, at her ease in a low chair with her work, had just asked her if she would not keep still for at least five minutes.

"Can't," Claire answered: "the air this morning has gone to my head."

"I should say it had gone to your feet. You've never stopped swinging one of them since you sat down. I've never seen you so nervous, Claire; and I don't like it."

"Now, Marian, you dear old heaven-born nurser, don't begin that! I had it all the way across from one of your senior profession. By the way, I wonder if you ever heard of him. He's a Doctor Rathbone."

"Not John Rathbone, the gynecologist?"

"His name certainly is John; but what sort of an ologist he may be I don't know, except that he's a surgeon and lives in West Fifty-third Street with a Doctor Marlitt."

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"That's the man: and he has a sanatorium in East Sixtieth Street?"

"I don't know that, either."

"Why, Claire, he's one of the best-known men in the profession! And I've heard a lot about him from one of his nurses, who was in my class at the hospital."

"As a physician I, of course, can't vouch for him; but as a man, he seemed to be rather a rare one."

"Precisely the verdict, my dear, of all the rest of the women. His patients adore him and his nurses worship him. And while he's perfectly lovely to all of them, none ever seems to know him well: if you got to, you were specially favored."

"If I did, it was more likely due to the elements. The poor man couldn't help himself. Almost everyone being seasick, he had no one else to talk to; and one had to pass the time somehow."

"You old fraud! You know that he must have liked you."

"Now, Marian, don't add to my nervousness by keeping me in suspense. Don't you see that I'm on tenterhooks to know the rest of these doctor-infatuated women's gossip? Tell me the whole reputation murder at once."

"Well, there's a mystery about him. He was abroad studying for several years, as you prob-

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ably know, and when he came back he brought an ostensibly adopted baby girl with him. Mrs. Mills, now his head-nurse and the wife of his half-brother, from whom she had separated while he—Rathbone—was abroad, had turned her house, near Roosevelt, into lodgings for P. and S. students. He went to live with her, too; and she took care of the child for him, having one of her own but a few years older. They say he idolized it, and that when it died it almost killed him.”

“Poor fellow!” said Claire with tears in her eyes; “I can easily believe it; he seems to have such a big heart. But how do you suppose, Marian, he ever lived that thing down as a physician in this country?”

“I suppose by being a great one.”

“Of course!” said Claire, her tone increasing in bitterness. “How stupid of me to ask. Have something to give people that they really need or want, and what they damn a woman or a failure for, they’ll not only exonerate but sneakily admire in the man who has, in spite of them, made a name for himself.”

Jumping up and throwing her arms about her, Marian said tenderly: “And you, dear, might do it, too, if you’d only put the force that you waste in grieving over that cowardly cad into your work. Oh! why can’t you see that he’s that? Even if he were not incapable of loving

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anyone but himself, he can't love you just because you're so much above him in every way that his mean little heart and soul are as incapable of understanding and appreciating you as a mouse an eagle."

"Your affection for me, dear, is making you positively eloquent—possibly, too, distort the facts: at any rate, the world, if it knew them, would tell you that you did, and consider you, also, without the pale for approving them."

"Thank heaven! it doesn't know them," Marian fervently echoed, adding "and it probably doesn't know them about Doctor Rathbone, either."

"But don't you see that that's one of the most unbearable things about it to me? It makes one seem to go skulking through life. I sometimes feel as if I'd like to shriek it from the housetops; if only that I might earn the right to despise those of our eminently respectable family who have sold their bodies for money and position and would, if they knew, hold their dainty raiment aside if I passed in too close proximity. *Now* I have not the right. I hardly dare even to make a new friend, feeling that I'm a cheat because they, too, if they knew, would want none of me. And so Doctor Rathbone's done it!" She said it with almost savage exultation, and then her lips tightened.

"But, *of course*, that's quite different; *he* is a

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man!—and, doubtless, would despise me with the rest, thinking it venial in himself, unforgivable in me, a woman.”

“ Claire! Claire! you’re perfectly morbid about it all! I don’t for one moment believe he’d do anything of the sort, being a man worthy of the name. If only you might have six months of my life, getting down to the elemental things, the real human as I see it day after day, you’d know that you *had* the right to despise; for, whatever your faults and mistakes may have been, you’ve never been guilty of the lack of heart and mean insincerities of which most of the world is guilty, and for which, more than all else, it seems to me despicable. But the beautiful part of my work is that it also enables me to see so much of the fine and lovely in human nature: courage, patience, uncomplaining sweetness.”

“ ’Tis the angel in you, Marian, that sees it in others; and I shouldn’t wonder if you are, to a large extent, the inspiration of it.”

“ That’s not true. If you had my opportunities for seeing the good you’d have more faith in it.”

“ Perhaps you’re right; and it’s the good you find that makes life seem so worth while to you, and the bad I’ve found that makes it seem so little worth while to me.”

“ I’m sure it is, dear,” answered Marian,

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impulsively; "and also because you're so run down. Which reminds me that we are wasting a health-giving opportunity by spending such a morning as this in the house. Go get your things on and let's go out in the park."

After their walk Marian had left Claire at Fifty-ninth Street to keep a lunch engagement; the latter returning home to find a letter from Dick Wall. With a beating heart and the dread of his every act which now never left her, she opened it and read:

DEAR CLAIRE:

It was good to get the announcement of your arrival, and I am hoping soon to get down to the city to see you. But I'm so busy that I fear it cannot be for some weeks yet. And what a delightful trip you must have had. I suppose you'll be full of new energy and eagerness to get to work after such a holiday. What lucky creatures you women are with all the leisure you have!

The girls are back. Mary has brought a friend with her, an awfully jolly sort, rides well and plays a rattling game of tennis. She beat me four sets running to-day, though yesterday I beat her three. They are calling me now to lift something and I must run.

It's just a line to say how glad I am you're home.

Lovingly,

DICK.

When Marian returned late in the afternoon, she found Claire lying on the window-seat with red eyes, the letter fallen to the floor beside her. Picking it up she handed it to her tentatively. Claire made no move to take it, saying:

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“ You may read it if you like.”

After doing so, Marian handed it back, disgust rampant in both face and voice. “ He not only lies, but does it so stupidly. Can’t come in to see you, he’s so busy—playing tennis. This man’s hold upon you, Claire, is the only thing that ever made me doubt your intelligence. It seems so strange that you cannot see, not only that he’s stupid, but that he’s false to the core.”

“ Perhaps I’m coming to. I’ve been trying so hard to think that he deceived himself and so, unknowingly, deceived me. But oh, how can I believe it has all been a lie! It is too degrading! too humiliating! How could I ever have come to believe in him so utterly, if, as you think, he is wholly false? ”

“ Probably for the very reason that he is so inherently insincere that he can’t tell the truth even to himself.”

“ You mean that he refuses to see—always dresses up the ugly, naked fact; that he’s a sentimentalist? Yes, yes, he’s just that! ” She got up and began to walk restlessly about the room, talking in a low tone as if unconscious of speaking her thoughts. “ Even his admissions of wrong are sentimental. My ‘ acumen ’ and ‘ the beauties of my soul ’ are ever leading him to ‘ higher things ’; things that he never makes any real effort to attain. I’ve thought all you

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say and much worse; and then come the memories of the weeks that we were together, when I know that he really cared for me. I know it! Marian; I know it! ”

“ He probably did—then. When people are ill, they’re always emotional. Then too, being alone as you were in a foreign land with no one who knew either of you to represent public opinion, for the only time in his life he probably was real and could appreciate and respond to you. But when he returned to his narrow, provincial, little corner of the world, he began to see with the virtuous eyes of his immaculate class; which loves so to prate of love and charity and Christ’s treatment of the Magdalen, which it never by any chance dares to emulate. It is such men as he, and not Doctor Rathbone, who excuse themselves and look upon the woman for ever afterwards as a soiled and cheapened thing, unfit for the pious circle which they, of course, may still adorn—after doing penance. And I don’t doubt that he wears mental sackcloth and ashes in between games of tennis—when he thinks of it, or his liver is out of order. Even if he did care for you once, he’s now desperately afraid of the very things he once most admired in you, with probably an unacknowledged, sneaking remnant of that admiration still left; for a coward always respects and envies courage in another. Your love is a

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perennial gratification to his vanity and, being the man that he is, he'll solicit and take it just as long as you'll give it; always professing the intention of giving you in return that which he never does give—he's 'so busy.' He's *such* a common type. I've come to know him well, having found him in almost every other woman's heart-tragedy I've run across; and they've not been few. But to think that such a woman as you, Claire, should have been caught in his net! "

A painful flush suffused Claire's sensitive face, which brought Marian's arms about her while she pled for forgiveness, admitting that she had been brutal, but adding in extenuation, "Hatred always breeds cruelty. I never hated anyone before in my whole life, but I hate that man! Come lie down, dear, you look so worn out, and I'll get tea."

When, behind the steaming kettle, Marian's face had regained its normal expression of good-will towards all men, Claire resumed the subject.

"I'm not so dense as you think, Marian; nor have I spent these past four months, for the most part alone with my own thoughts, without having come to realize many things that I was wholly blind to when I went away. What I now feel for Dick Wall is, I think, more akin to disgust than love, and my faith in him is quite gone. But I still cannot understand either

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him or myself. As he now inspires me with contempt, my reason tells me that what he feels for me should be a matter of indifference to me; and it isn't. I want him to love me—to prove himself not ignoble, if only to justify me to myself. If he has no love for me he is despicable. And in that case, for me to love him, when he's unworthy of love, means that I'm pretty nearly as low as he; for then his lure for me, as mine for him, has been the same after all: and do you think it easy to acknowledge yourself a mere dupe of passion, when you have rated love so high and sensuality so low? ” She threw her hands above her head, her supple body writhing as if in pain. “ The day is coming when, I fear, I shall loathe him for the power he has wielded over me, and hate him, as you never could hate, for having degraded me in my own eyes. There might be inspiration, even joy, in loving unrequited a man like John Rathbone; but to love a Dick Wall—it is an agony of abasement.”

Marian could find no response. She could only grieve at her impotence to help, while raging inwardly at the fact that the man went unpunished who had brought that tortured, hunted look into the beautiful dark eyes she loved, now turned, with unblinking gaze, upon the setting sun flaming into them and the room behind her, bathing all it touched in crimson light.



V

At the same hour John Rathbone was ringing the bell of an old-fashioned brownstone house on Fifth Avenue, near Forty-second Street. The maid who answered it, saying that Mrs. Lane was awaiting him in the library, led the way upstairs. The lower part of the house presented such a gloomy, inhospitable aspect that it was with a feeling of relief he entered a room into which some sunlight had found its way. A woman dressed in black, her white hair arranged with Quaker-like simplicity, rose to greet him.

"It's very good of you to come so soon, Doctor Rathbone. Will you sit there," pointing to a chair facing the windows.

"Your note said your need of help was great," he answered, simply.

"And it is," she replied, nervously fingering her handkerchief. "I am almost seventy years old, sir, and now in my old age, alone and inexperienced—for my husband always managed even our household expenses—I am left with the great responsibility and burden of disposing of almost sixty million dollars; as you doubt-

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less know from the newspapers. I suppose you think it very strange that I, a total stranger, should be asking you to come to my assistance. It was my husband's last request to me."

"It is somewhat difficult for me to grasp; for, to my knowledge, I never even saw Mr. Lane, much less knew him."

"I know that; but he knew you," and the austerity of her face softened in a smile.

"It's most extraordinary!"

"My husband, Doctor Rathbone, was an extraordinary man in more ways than one. First, I want to tell you some of the things he really was. About the only true thing the newspapers have said of him is, that he was a very poor boy and died a very rich man. And the thing which for years these newspapers have so cruelly dwelt upon—his two years in prison—I want you to know that he was sent there for a theft that he never committed."

"How terrible!"

"Yes, it was terrible. And those two years and the hard struggle afterwards to make even a livelihood—I tried very hard to overcome it; but the bitterness and hatred that had grown up in his heart—this was all before I knew him—I was never able to wipe out. He was thought—and how wrongly I alone know—mean and hard even by many of those whom he helped; by the rich because he didn't throw away his

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money and would never give to their organized charities; by the poor because—to use his own words—he would not degrade able-bodied men by giving them money. The day before he died he said that he'd become convinced that there was but one true charity, to care for the sick, and told me to send for you, who had convinced him of it, to show me how to put the money he would leave me to the best use."

"You both do me great honor," Rathbone answered, his deep, resonant tones vibrating with feeling. "But first, please tell me what your husband knew of me and thought I had done to merit so great a trust as this: it quite bewilders me," passing his hand across his eyes as if to find if they were open and he not dreaming.

"Do you remember, a couple of years ago, being called in to see the wife of an Italian whose little boy had been abducted by the Black Hand, by whom he refused to be blackmailed?"

"Mosca! Indeed I not only remember, but know him well. He's a man among men; and such a thing as that, Mrs. Lane, one could never forget. It was one of the most moving and heroic scenes I have ever witnessed."

"Please tell me more of it; I remember only the bare details. My husband dwelt mostly upon your part in it."

"Mosca is a true patriot if there ever was

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one, and great enough to live his belief that if we are not willing to sacrifice ourselves—the *me* and *mine*—for the public welfare, there will never be any real progress. Knowing that to ransom the child would be putting a premium upon further crimes of the sort, he refused to accept these criminals' terms. The saddest part of it all was that his wife had heart-disease; which neither of them knew until the evening they had called me in. As soon as I had examined the woman I knew that there was but small possibility of her living through the night. For hours we fought hard to save her, and through it all her pitiful supplications to bring the boy to her never ceased. Mosca loved his wife and child as only such great-hearted men can love, and those hours must have been agony to him; but he never wavered. For the most part, he just sat quietly in a chair by the window, mopping the sweat from his face. She died before morning; and the next evening the boy was brought back. I assure you, there are few things I have ever been more glad of than of that man's getting his child again."

"Indeed I can easily believe it. He is surely one of God's true armor-bearers and deserving of his reward. But don't you remember another incident connected with it, that when you came there was another man in the room who said to you that if you saved the woman he'd give

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you any fee you asked? Pardon me, if I tell you that my husband said you turned upon him like a snarling dog and asked him what sort of cad he took you for."

Rathbone smiled as, the incident recurring to him distinctly, he noted her omission of the "damned" he had used to qualify cad.

"Yes," he said, "I do remember, and how like a veritable schoolboy I lost my temper."

"That man was my husband, Doctor Rathbone; and he liked your temper because, he said, it showed him that you were 'no grafter.' Mosca was one of his workmen; and, hearing of the child's abduction, he had gone to see him to learn if he were too poor to meet the black-mailer's demands, and if so, to offer him the money. This he did; but could not prevail upon him to accept it. He was so delighted with the heroic stand the man had taken, and, finding his wife so ill, had told him to send for the best physician he knew and that he would pay his fee. But even this he could only make him take as a loan."

"Yes," said Rathbone, ruefully, "and I had to do the accepting." Noting her puzzled look, he explained. "One doesn't easily get in the way of a self-respect like Mosca's, much as it may seem to stand in the way of one's own."

"I see, sir; and also why my husband liked

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you so much from the first that he began to make inquiries about your work. Learning of your untiring and unremunerated labors among the poor—just the week before he died, he was planning to go to see you. It was, you may remember, just after your article appeared in the *North American* about the state's obligation to care for and instruct its sick poor."

"Yes, that's one of my 'wild, impracticable, socialistic dreams,' I believe the very learned critics called it—although our municipal government is already making splendid efforts towards it, in more ways than one."

"But, if the city cannot do it, as yet, isn't this just our opportunity? Of all things I believe it is what my dear husband would most have liked."

Struggling with an almost overwhelming sense of bewilderment, he groped for a response as from an illimitable distance; that far-off sun of fancy, to come too close to which is to court the fate of Icarus. Yet here he was almost touching it and neither melting nor hurling to destruction. Somewhat unsteadily he made answer:

"It has been my dream of dreams to do just this."

"But could you give your time to it? Wouldn't it interfere with your practice among the better class?"

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“ Very probably, if you mean by the better the wealthier class; which, however, can always buy another’s services. I have often robbed the rich to be able to give to those who had nothing; but I never liked the task any too well.”

“ I’m quite sure that my husband would not have considered it robbing. He believed that ability should demand the highest price it could get. And so, Doctor Rathbone, if you will give me yours and the time necessary for so large an undertaking, I will pay you whatever you consider that it is worth.”

Again deeply touched by her simple faith in him, he hesitated for the words to convey his appreciation.

“ Do you know Ruskin’s saying, Mrs. Lane, that ‘ there is no wealth but life ’? My wealth lies in my ability to conserve life—life and health. I’ve never liked to barter this wealth that is mine for the mere wage of dollars and cents. It is an economic necessity that, I believe, all who really love their work would evade if they could. Freed from it, I doubt if there ever lived a scientist or artist, whose knowledge and talent benefited his fellow-men, who would not have made of it a glad gift to them. You are offering me far more than money; it is freedom—almost unlimited opportunity. And the greater the opportunity, the greater the reward: for there is none the world has to offer equiva-

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lent to a man's own consciousness that he has not lived in vain."

"Now I see, sir, why you're called a visionary. If only my husband might have lived to know you, I think his faith in men might have come to life again. Think it all over, and when you can tell me of some definite plans, let me know, and I'll arrange for a meeting with my lawyers. I believe you're a very good man, Doctor Rathbone, and I thank God for sending you to me in my need."

"With all my heart, I hope I shall not prove unworthy of your confidence; though, I assure you, you over-estimate me greatly. To express my appreciation of the honor you've done me I can find no words; I can only thank you by deeds; and to accomplish them I must summon all the wise and experienced heads that I can command to help us. When I have done so and have, as you say, some definite plans to submit to you, I will let you know. Until then, good-by."



VI

ONE evening, about a fortnight later, Claire was going over some new music when the telephone rang. A deep, cheery voice, which, for the moment, she could not locate in spite of its seeming familiarity, asked if she would let in a visitor some twenty minutes later.

“ Who is it, please? ”

“ Oh, inconstant woman! Have you forgotten me so soon? It’s your fellow-voyager of but a few weeks since.”

“ Oh, how do you do, Doctor Rathbone! I recognize you now. And indeed I’ve not forgotten; but was about beginning to believe that you had.”

“ If you’re disengaged this evening, I’ll prove that a wrong surmise within the next half hour.”

He had almost done so by his hearty greeting, had not his altered appearance made him quite another man than the one she had known. With his now closely cropped head, sharply pointed beard, and evening clothes, he was unfamiliarly handsome, distinguished, cosmopolitan; an altogether different person from her

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shaggy ship's comrade. After hearing from Marian that he was a man of note, she had felt some trepidation at the thought of seeing him again; then, as the weeks went by, a greater one lest she should not. But now that he stood before her, as distinguished in appearance as reputation, she was overwhelmed with a shyness that produced a halting:

"It's nice to see you. But you look so—what have you done to yourself?"

"Nothing that I know of," he answered with puzzled scrutiny of her face.

"Your hair," she ventured.

"Oh, that. I suppose I do look an unkempt anarchist away from a barber even for a week. I made such close connections in Paris that I didn't get hold of one there, and the ship's failed, too. Didn't you notice that all the men on board were looking scrubby?"

"Yes, but I thought it was because they were all sick."

"They mostly were, including the barber. But tell me about yourself and what you've been doing since you got home."

"Nothing at all interesting. My cousin Marian came for a couple of weeks and helped me to get in order; since then, I've been trying to get back some technique—and that's all. You tell me what you've been doing; it's sure to have been far more interesting."

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"An altogether impossible feat in one evening, young lady. I could much more easily chronicle my sins of omission. But, before I tell you anything, I want to know how you are."

"About the same as usual, thank you."

"Hm! perverse as usual, I see; and as averse as ever to the woman's self-revealing monologue."

Beginning to feel at ease with him again, she replied: "I've just told you that there was nothing interesting to reveal: and I'd so much rather hear how you found Mike and Martha and Marlitt."

"They're all thriving, thank you, and wanting to make your acquaintance."

If her words failed of self-revelation her face did not; and shyness of him coming over her again, combined with the old dread of the "new friends" who might not want her "if they knew," brought a blush of pained confusion and tied her tongue. Grasping her discomfort, though wholly at a loss to account for it, he added, hastily:

"Of course, only if you'd like to."

"Oh, you mustn't think it's that. But—perhaps—you know really so little of me, or I of you, for that matter, that——" looking helplessly and beseechingly at him, she broke off, "I can't explain."

His face suddenly looked stern and drawn;

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an expression she recalled having seen it assume once before.

“Have *you*, perhaps, heard something of *me* that makes you think I may not be a desirable——”

“Indeed, indeed you misunderstand!” she interrupted him. “If anything I’ve heard of you has made me a little afraid of you, it is that you are so well known; have achieved so much while I have done so little worth while. And, perhaps, if you knew more of me *you* would not——”

“Let me tell you something,” he, in turn, interrupted her. “At any rate, I feel that I know you sufficiently well to have no further knowledge of anything your life may have been make any difference in *my* wish to be *your* friend.”

“How like you that seems,” she said, wistfully grateful. “You can believe, as I do, that what one is counts for more than anything one may have been?”

“Surely! Also that one’s past is no concern of anyone’s other than those who may have participated in it. If that has been for good, one’s debt there is paid, if for ill——”

“Yes?” She waited, tensely.

“One must make full reparation, if reparation be possible, and if it be not—well, then, are there not always the victims of others’ wrongs?”

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It is almost too trite to reiterate that good may come out of every experience, if it be only in the knowledge acquired through it. And equally true is it that there can be no adequate understanding of one's fellow-men in the heart that has not bled for its own evil; had its desirous dreams burned to ashes. From out the ashes of dreams rises love's trinity: wisdom, sympathy, service."

"Ashes of dreams—wisdom, sympathy, service," she echoed, rhythmically. "It's music."

"Make some for me, won't you? You know I've not yet heard you play."

To the rhythm of his words she began improvising vague, unfinished themes and sustained repetitions, fading away in tender ripples and diminishing crescendos, as of questions half formed and lost in gentle musing. In mystic isolation her spirit seemed wandering further and ever further from him as, in rapt listening, she sought the answers. On and on she played, weaving about him a magic spell; in which he lost all sense of her physical presence, of his own, of all else than melody penetrating, flooding, illuminating his whole being, and turning to a radiant glory of truth his soul's vision; the dream of hope fulfilled, of beauty that never was, of love that may not be; the light shimmering always beyond like the winged shapes of prayer. At last the tender cadences

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died away and, drawing her hands slowly from the keys, she turned towards him. Opening his eyes he leaned forward, wonder and admiration mingling in his look.

"Did you like it?" she asked, timidly. "It was you—your words."

"Me—mine! My child, it is *you*; your very own; your genius! I had not dreamed you possessed so great a gift. You said truly that I did not know you. And you call this having achieved little? Why, it is a great power—the power of the artist to limn the spirit's deepest and holiest aspirations; to give it food and drink when it is exhausted and athirst. This is *your* wealth; and how rich—how magnificently equipped you are to spend! I know now where to come when my world jangles out of tune."

As if in derision of his last sentence the telephone bell pealed a discordant summons.

"It's some tiresome person for you," she explained, handing him the receiver.

"Whom I must see, too," he said, regretfully, as he hung it up and took his hat. "This is the Nemesis that respects none of my pleasures. I'm so often compelled to grab them and run that, unless you'll take me informally and at odd hours, I shan't be able to come a-begging of you nearly so often as I'll want to. Shall I be welcome thus?"

She gave him her hand, asking: "Can you

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doubt it? For, now that you tell me I have something worth while to give you, I'm no longer a bit afraid of," pursing her lips, "'one of the best-known men in the profession.'"

"Flatterer!"

"If it is flattery, it's Marian's. Good-night, and come soon again."

"That will I, little friend! It was beautiful—very beautiful. Thank you, and good-night."

Still unable to shake off the spell, he boarded a Fifty-ninth Street car going east. His patient disposed of, he turned into the park, as he often did of an evening for a walk and to "invite his soul." His thoughts returned to Claire. Until now, although her intelligence and quickness of wit had charmed him, it was perhaps her unhappiness that had made the strongest appeal. But henceforth he could not think of her as needy recipient. What his attitude towards her might come to be he did not ask himself; he knew only that his former one had to be readjusted.

Once he, too, had dreamed of the relationship between man and woman based upon equality; as free to withhold as it was rich in capacity to give; as strong to resist as it would be competent to understand: the comradeship of strong, clear-seeing spenders, not the feeble mendicancy of sentimentalists. But having

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reached his fortieth year without ever having seen, much less found it for himself, he had come to believe it "the love that may not be" and to class himself among the unmateables. It was not that he was now finding a reason for picking himself out of this class; but music had allured him to dreams of the impossible; it was deliciously peaceful amid the trees with the stars overhead, and his brain had not yet recovered its wonted steadiness because of the glare of the Aladdin's lamp which millions of dollars had lit for him but a fortnight since. He felt as if he might be walking into Alice's looking-glass; in which he saw dream turning right side up and reality upside down. Not until he reached his own door did he quite come back to the world of eternal verities, brought there by Mike's cold nose and a large bone which, after licking his hand, this pampered canine returned to munch in the pastel-tinted center of a beautiful Persian rug; from which, needless to say, he was speedily dislodged, with dignity mightily offended by an assisting, if gently administered, boot, and being called a "white imp of darkness." A mournful whimper and scratching upon the pantry door brought Martha to find Doctor John, as well as Mike, on the other side of it.

"Quick! Martha, with some warm soapsuds and a little ammonia. Of course, we can't pos-

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sibly imagine how it got there; but there's a bone and some grease spots on Doctor Marlitt's favorite rug—you know, the pink-centered one in the waiting room."

"Lor! Doctor dear, I'm glad it was you found him. The poor lamb! He doesn't know about rugs, and Doctor Marlitt's hard on him for it."

"Brutally abusive," says an emphatic wag of a white tail, while Martha has to administer comfort.

"Better hurry, Martha, or there may soon be something hard descending upon that white back," Mike's whimpering having brought a whistle from an adjoining room. "I'll go and keep the doctor in his office." Which he did, while Martha stealthily scrubbed and Mike openly sulked.

VII

"WELL, now it's on, how do you like it?" asked Claire of Marian, who, having "fastened her up," had turned her about, stepping back for a better view.

"It's exquisite—a genuine work of art; and as like a lovely, gauzy butterfly as a mere mortal's attire could be."

"Those designers of Drecoll's are artists," answered Claire, turning to survey herself in the glass. "But what a spectre at the feast I'll look; this blue makes me even more ghastly. And I'm afraid, Marian, I'll *have* to take a dose of bromo-seltzer or give up going. Please be good and get it for me, for I've got to sit down," throwing herself into a reclining chair.

Marian fetched the bottle, almost empty, anxiously asking: "Have you taken all that since I was here? And it's only three weeks ago! I wish you wouldn't, Claire; it's so bad for you."

"But what's one to do if one's headache *won't* go away? And it seems to me I've had it ever since you left."

"The answer seems almost too obvious to utter: see a doctor, of course."

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"To have him tell me the same old tiresome thing, 'you're neurotic.' They always fall back on that when they don't know what's the matter with you. The man who says it to me again I know I shall surely whack. Better eschew all such temptation, don't you think? Think of the scandal it would create, particularly if it were Bonner with his immoral lack of humor. But do ring for a cab, Marian; and if you don't hurry, we'll be late."

"I've a good mind to tell Mabel we'll not be able to come, put you to bed, and send for Bonner."

"That would be too mean to Mabel, with two extra men on her hands; and, of course, she's counting on you for Alfred. How do you suppose she ever gets through dinners alone with him? Is it any wonder that she's society mad? Poor Mabel! I wonder if the price paid still suffices."

"You're not quite fair to Alfred, Claire. He's not intellectual, if you like; but he has a great deal of heart, and he really loves Mabel. I wish she might return a little of it; but she takes even less trouble as time goes on to hide her boredom and irritation with him. He's anything but happy, and several times lately I've seen him—well, if not drunk, pretty close to it. I can't help feeling awfully sorry for him and anxious about it all, for"—she hesitated and

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went on reluctantly, "there's a man, whom I don't trust, who is more with her than I think is good for any of them. I do hope he won't be there to-night. Come along; I'm ready."

Claire rose with an effort, struggling with the dizziness that made her uncertain as to whether environing things, supposedly stationary, were not moving with her. She felt a grateful sense of certainty that the elevator and the cab were meant to move; which the latter, a taximeter, did with such a glorious disregard of life, law, and order, that in a bewilderingly short interval, she had to move again and steer the feet, that seemed, somehow, not to belong to her, through Mabel's sumptuous bronze doors. A maid having relieved them of their wraps, they mounted to the still more sumptuous drawing-room, where golden-haired Mabel, radiant in white satin, pearls, and diamonds, the center of an admiring group of lesser lights, held out to them the graciously indifferent hand of polite society.

"Glad to see you girls," she drawled, "even if you are outrageously late," and turning to a man beside her, who, to Claire's casual glance, suggested a cameo and a greyhound, introduced him: "My cousin, Miss Raymond, Mr. Hawkes; whom you're to talk music to. Alfred," addressing a broad-shouldered, boyish-faced man,

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"you take Marian in." The others arranged for, Mabel placed her hand upon the arm of the man at her elbow and the delayed dinner was sought; Alfred voicing the hope that Octave would not vent his resentment upon them by any of his usual methods, for having his dinner kept waiting. Which if he continued doing, he confided to Marian, he might one day forget himself sufficiently to descend to the kitchen and "punch his damned French head for him"; as none of his insolence had as yet been able to induce Mabel to discharge this already famous Octave, whose dinners were one of the by no means lesser attractions of the Alfred Lawrence establishments.

"The question is, 'to be, or not to be,' the slave of one's chef," said Claire's companion in tones of amused sarcasm, "but, as in all this broad land, or I doubt in Paris either, another Octave is not to be found, we submit."

This sounded so wholly unlike the average run of Mabel's men that Claire turned a curious glance upon him. The face was of a rare distinction and beauty. His accent and certain marks of breeding revealed an Englishman, while the almost startling contrast of jet-black hair and eyebrows with the pallor of his skin suggested a strain of Latin blood.

The bromo-seltzer beginning to take effect, she responded in his vein:

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“ ‘ We may live without friends, we may live without books, but——’ ”

“ True, fair lady; and delightfully companioned and ambrosially fed as here, with truly human perversity we begin digging our graves, as if to confound the poet with a paradox by proving that we cannot live with them—such cooks as this, at any rate. Are you of the opinion of the cynic who affirmed that most of us dig our ultimate resting-place with our teeth? ”

“ Alfred is better able than I to speak authoritatively on that subject; I’ll ask him.” Seated upon his left, she turned to put the question which was arrested by his words to Marian:

“ They’re either naggers or bores. I tell you what it is, Marian, men don’t like your highly educated women nor want to marry them.”

Alfred’s banalities acted upon Claire as such an irritant that they generally brought down upon his hapless head a biting sarcasm that made him both fear and dislike her. This last seemed almost to invite it—if he but knew—but poor Alfred did not know, and ever blundered on, hobnailed, where angels would have feared to tread.

“ Why, Alfred, you’re a sage! Of precisely this opinion was John Stuart Mill. Ever heard of him? ” And she waited mercilessly for his

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"I've forgotten." Ignoring Marian's supplicating glance she continued: "Well, he was tolerably well known in his day, and we women hail him as a prophet still. He, also, thought man didn't like brains in woman because, he said, most men couldn't endure to live with an equal."

Alfred's face grew pinker and Marian's miserable, while Mr. Hawkes, hiding a smile behind his napkin, stepped into the breach, quoting:

"'Venus herself, if she were bald, would not be Venus.' And alas! putting ideas into the head seems to have the unfortunate result of taking the hairs off. To deprive woman of her greatest glory would be shame indeed; added to which, it would be a wrong to the race, as natural selection might thereby eventually divest us entirely of hair."

"As man comes into the world and goes out of it with but a modicum, I think he'd manage to get on without it in the interim between the cradle and the grave," Claire retorted.

"'Alas, poor Yorick!'" and he smiled, whimsically. "But we seem to talk much of graves; let's talk of something less grewsome. Tell me what you think of Debussy's *Pelleas*?"

"Back to it again," she girmed. "Methinks it smells of vaults; while cradle and grave is its final motif."

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"Cryptic you certainly are," he laughingly fenced. And so thoroughly did he enjoy her skill at repartee, that Mabel sent many a covert glance in their direction ere dinner was over, annoyance so visible upon her pretty features that Alfred whispered to Marian:

"Mabel's in a rage, and, aside from the pleasure Spencer, damn him! seems to find in staring at her neck and arms, I don't believe she's giving him much else. Marian, can't you make her have her dresses cut higher? Of course she's beautiful; but a man doesn't want another man climbing down his wife's clothes with his eyes like that. I'll tell him the swine that he is one of these days."

In low tones Marian answered sadly: "Most of them will do it so long as she wears them like that; and she's more to blame for it than they are. I've spoken to her about it, often; but it does no good. It's given me a heartache many a time. I know just the way you feel about it, Alfred, and I'm sorry."

"You're a damned good sort, Marian. I wish she was more like you in some things. I suppose I'm a fool to love her as I do; but God knows it's no cinch, for she only despises me for it."

"Careful, Alfred; you'll be overheard."

"Never fear. Hawkes and Claire are too occupied with their own smartness, and they "

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—nodding to the couple at Marian's right, "half boozed."

Knowing him to be so, she said anxiously, as Mabel rose: "Don't be rude to Mr. Spencer, will you, Alfred?"

With pathetic effort at dignity he answered: "We Lawrences don't insult guests at our own dinner tables."

With a none too comfortable certainty of the power of noblesse oblige over Alfred in his present condition, Marian followed Mabel; paying off his score to Claire en route to the drawing-room.

"Your sarcasms at Alfred's expense, Claire, show you up in a hardly better light than it seems to delight you to show him. It's like hitting someone smaller than one's self."

"I know it," answered Claire with disarming meekness. "I'm always ashamed afterwards; but alas! there's always that afterwards when he exasperates me so that it pops out before I can help it. But please don't scold me, Marian, my head's splitting. Sit here," and she drew her down upon a rare and uncomfortable piece of *Louis Seize* furniture in front of a partly opened window. Drawing her scarf over her shoulders, she continued: "We've clothes enough on not to catch cold, and, as the rest haven't, they'll leave us to ourselves here. Isn't the Fanshawe disgusting? I wonder if

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it's because she's so fat that she looks so naked, or because she's so vulgar. What are women coming to! "

" One might think they were deliberately trying to inflame men," said Marian, wearily.

" They don't conceal much but their virtue, I grant you." Reverting to Mrs. Fanshawe, " But surely Mabel can't like that woman; she's as coarse as a fishwife."

" Not over-refined, perhaps. But she does a lot of good with her money; and it was at her house that Mabel met Hawkes."

" Oh, it's Mr. Hawkes, is it? " Claire all but whistled in the astonishment of her enlightenment. " He is dangerous, Marian; for he's clever as he's handsome, and that's saying a good deal; though I fear he's very like the rest of Mabel's belongings, beautiful and—and—one doesn't know exactly why, but one is never sure that the beauty isn't all on the surface."

" It's all so utterly soulless," mourned Marian. " Here comes Mrs. Spencer: do be civil, Claire." This last in a hurried whisper, as a tall, well-groomed woman with hard, handsome face pulled a chair up beside them, saying:

" You look like two conspirators. Tell me, what are you conspiring against? "

" The flesh-pots," answered Claire.

" I heard Mr. Hawkes calling you cryptic and

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you certainly are. It's cold enough for a crypt here. Shut this window," to the butler who was passing the liqueur, in the tone generally reserved for yellow curs—unless one happens to like dogs. Then, with another frozen smile: "Are you going to play for us to-night, Miss Raymond?"

"Of course she is," came the loud, nasal tones of Mrs. Fanshawe from across the room. "I hear, Miss Raymond, that you could give cards and spades to Carreno and win out against her."

"I'm sorry to refuse so subtle a flatterer," Claire cooed, dangerously; "but, owing to a headache and an overdose of bromo-seltzer, I couldn't distinguish the black keys from the white to-night. Bring me another, please," to the man who was taking her empty cup.

"Yes, do have another," urged Mrs. Fanshawe, joining the group. "My head's always clearer after coffee, and perhaps you'll be able to play after a second cup."

"I doubt it," acridly rejoined Claire, "my head's not that kind."

"Cryptic again," said Mrs. Spencer, who then essayed to entertain them with a new phase of the last exposed scandal, one of the protagonists of which was an intimate friend of Alfred's.

At this point Mrs. Fanshawe's liqueur glass,

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slipping through her unsteady fingers, deposited its sticky contents down the front of her dress; at which she angrily ejaculated, "Hell!"

Rising suddenly, Claire put her hand to her head to steady herself, saying, "Excuse me, I'm ill—too ill," to Marian who followed her, "to stand any more of these people. Let's get out into the air." And with hasty excuses to Mabel, who accepted them without comment, they left.

Whereupon Mrs. Spencer, who had a limited income, courted Mrs. Fanshawe who had millions; and Mrs. Fanshawe, who had no pedigree, smiled upon Mrs. Spencer who had. Said the Pedigree:

"For a poor relation, and unmarried at that, that girl gives herself more airs! Mabel will have a hard time getting her married off. She's as rude as she's disagreeable, and none too good-looking either—bilious probably. Did you ever see such a color?"

"She looks sick to me," said the better-hearted Mrs. Fanshawe, who had now recovered her equilibrium and with a fat laugh continued: "Being a poor relation is bad for the temper. I've got a lot of 'em and I know. But I don't agree with you about her looks; she's so *distinguée* lookin'. I'm goin' to give some *musicales* after the holidays, and I wonder if I could get her to play for me."

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Mrs. Spencer's curl of the lip was quite lost upon her as, the men coming in at this moment, she was beckoning to Mr. Hawkes; who, as he seated himself beside her, having taken a survey of the room and noted Claire's absence no less than the fact of Mrs. Spencer's attention being engaged by the man who had joined her, asked:

"Where's the little *originale*?"

"Gone home. Evidently you didn't find her unattractive," chuckled Mrs. Fanshawe.

"Quite to the contrary. But why did she leave so early?"

"She said she was sick."

"She did look ill," Hawkes agreed. "I'm sorry, for I wanted to hear her play."

"And so am I, for I wanted to get her for one of my *musicales*. Fix it for me, Brooke, will you?"

"Since it's My Sovereign's command I will try to accomplish it—if you'll keep our pretty Mabel in the dark as to its being my work. You see, we've not had a glance since I entered the room—cause, the too-captivating Cinderella and your servant's too susceptible heart."

"Stop talkin' nonsense, Brooke; and, as Mabel's evidently goin' to give you the marble heart for the rest of the evenin', you can take me home. Look at my dress: I'm a mess."



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And they also said good-night; leaving Mabel in a mood that later sent Alfred to his club in search of a consolation that resulted in his spending the night there, put to bed by one of the servants.

VIII

EARLY the next morning Marian left for a previously arranged visit in the country; but anxiety for Claire, whose assumption of mere drowsiness did not deceive her, brought her back late the same afternoon. Letting herself in with the extra key that she always carried while in the city, she called "Claire," even before closing the door. Coming so suddenly from the brightly lighted hall, she could see nothing in the half-dark room; but an indistinct voice was audible from the direction of the window. Stumbling to the electric button she turned on the light, to find Claire lying upon the window-seat, her face unnaturally flushed, and muttering incoherently. Even before her hand had found its way to the hot forehead, Marian's experienced eye knew it for fever. As she stood for an instant in a stunned inertia of anxiety, the bell rang. Opening the door, she found a tall man standing outside who asked if Miss Raymond were at home.

"Yes," she answered, her consternation apparent in both face and voice; "but she's ill—much too ill to see anyone," trying to shut the door.

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"One moment, please," said this annoying person, making no effort to move away. "I should like to know what it is, and who is attending her."

An authoritative professional something about this last made her reply less aggressively: "No one yet. I was just going to send——"

"Will you let me have a look at her?" he broke in. "I'm a physician—Doctor Rathbone."

Her suspense giving way to intense relief, she gulped down a rising lump in her throat and said faintly: "I'm so glad, Doctor Rathbone! Please come in; she's delirious. I'm Claire's cousin, Marian Leighton."

He acknowledged the introduction with a bow, and immediately his eyes rested upon Claire's face, said: "And a mighty fortunate thing it is, Miss Leighton, that you are here!" Drawing a chair up beside Claire he first felt her pulse, then, taking his thermometer from his pocket, rose and handed it to Marian, saying, "Take her temperature, please." As he walked about the room, a violin from one direction and a piano from another kept up a hideously discordant accompaniment to his running questions, ending with, "And who is your physician?"

"Doctor Bonner," she answered, as she gave him the thermometer.

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"Bad," he muttered at seeing what it registered. Then more audibly, "I know Bonner very well; I'll call him up," adding, as he hung up the receiver: "He'll be here in a few minutes."

Returning to Claire, he leaned over her again. "I'm very much afraid it's typhoid, and so far advanced that she should have been in bed two weeks ago."

Doctor Bonner, true to his word, arrived a few moments later; and, having confirmed Rathbone's fears, expressed his satisfaction that Marian, who was one of his favorite nurses, happened to be off duty. "But this place with this infernal hubbub won't do at all. What do you say to Roosevelt? I'll see if they have a vacant room." Halfway to the telephone he stopped. "But how about your place, Rathbone? Could you possibly take her in? I'd far rather have her there; it's so much quieter."

"Yes, I will take her gladly. My one isolated room was vacated yesterday; and, fortunately, I have still another empty in which I can make Miss Leighton comfortable, as well."

"Thanks; that's first rate. I'll get an ambulance here as soon as you've got your things together, Marian, and——"

"I'll get them there," Rathbone answered his look.

"Thank you once more, old man. Then I'll

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come around to Sixtieth Street later, have another look at her, and see your man in charge. Whom have you got there now? ” With which they went out to the elevator together, Rathbone returning in a few moments.

By seven o'clock Claire was in bed in a well-equipped sanatorium, Marion happier in mind with each ice-bag that was filled; though not until after midnight, when Claire had been sleeping for an hour and she had extracted a promise from the nurse, who had come to relieve her, that she would call her the moment the delirium began again, could she be persuaded to leave her. Within less than three hours she was called: but with even this small allowance of sleep Marian's strong body was refreshed and she felt equal to another day's ordeal. It passed with no important change in Claire's condition until evening, when, her temperature going a degree higher than it had yet been, her delirium took such a terrifying form that neither persuasions nor orders from the head-nurse nor house-physician could induce her to leave Claire, who was now disclosing all the misery that had tortured her brain for over a year, and which Marian would have died at her post rather than allow any of these nurses to overhear. Doctor Maxwell, who, by virtue of his position as house-surgeon, having had a large experience with obdurate women,

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shrugged his shoulders and went to bed. But Mrs. Mills, Rathbone's dearest woman friend as well as head-nurse, knowing of Marian's devotion to her cousin and the strain of anxiety she must be under, added to the fact of her having had but three hours' sleep the previous night, fearing imminent collapse for her, as well as danger for Claire, sent a few words over the wire to Fifty-third Street that soon brought Rathbone knocking upon that guarded door.

"This won't do at all, Miss Leighton: we can't have you getting ill, too."

"But," Marian expostulated, "she is telling what no one must hear—what I'd be a treacherous deserter to allow anyone to hear. One can never trust women not to repeat things."

"Seldom, I agree with you, but—why, my child, you're tired out already," putting a kindly hand on her shoulder as he noted the nervous twitching of her face. "I'll stay with her. Mrs. Mills and Maxwell can easily handle all of my patients here to-morrow, and, having no operation pending, I can get my sleep in the morning. I often twist my night into day this way; and you can trust *me*, can't you?"

Although the whole fine face, showing appreciation and sympathy, told her that she might, she still hesitated, faltering:

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"But, perhaps, she would like you to know least of all."

"And, perhaps," he answered, gently, "I have already partly guessed it—her secret—and, because of it, know her to be only the more deserving of sympathy. And now will you go to bed? For, you know, it's the only way." And knowing it, she went.

Closing the door, he rearranged the green night-shade over the light, glanced over Marian's chart, felt if the ice-bags were still cold, took Claire's pulse, and then sat down to his long vigil; a shrinking listener to the sad story which, ere the night was over, she had told him in almost every phase of its pathos. It was not alone that she was a personal friend, and rapidly becoming a dear one, but the laying bare of her soul opened an old wound and set it to aching with a new bitterness.

After listening to her for seemingly endless hours, he pressed his hands over his ears for a temporary respite. While in this position, imagining that he heard a knock at the door, he rose to open it and, finding no one there, stood a moment to listen. Other than Claire's voice, there was not a sound in the still house. Except for a belated cab hurrying by and the occasional rumble and bell of the cars a block away, it was almost as quiet out of doors, with that early morning stillness of a great city that

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makes one tread softly, filled with awe of the millions that are sleeping. He closed the door and turned round to find Claire standing in the middle of the room. Taking her by the arm, he tried to lead her back to the bed; but with an eel-like swiftness she broke away from him, so that he was compelled to hold and lift her bodily in. Too weak to struggle, she broke into shuddering sobs, followed by a pitiful cry of fear and reproach:

“ Oh, Dick! you wouldn’t, you *couldn’t* force me—against my will! ” Then, as he took his hands from her shoulders, she began pleading for forgiveness. “ Of course I know you couldn’t; but you frighten me when you are like this and—and—— ” She moaned and moved her head restlessly from side to side, “ I can’t, I can’t! It makes me—I loathe myself and you seem—oh, horrible! like an animal! ” Again the moans, followed by a sharp cry. “ Don’t look at me like that; it’s as if you hated me. Try and understand, Dick—don’t go away—please try and understand. I wanted to give you every joy that I could—and so I gave you this, too. And because I loved you so, I have gone on until it has become—oh, you don’t know! Sometimes I have almost screamed. Perhaps, if you really loved me, I might feel different—I don’t know—but you—— We’ve made a terrible, terrible mistake. Can’t you

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see that we have?— It was so beautiful before—just to love you; and I felt so strong in it—so strong. And I thought it was strength—to give you everything—but I couldn't deny you anything. Perhaps, dear, the fault was more mine than yours, for, being a woman, I should have been strong enough for us both."

Rathbone buried his face in his hands upon the edge of the bed, a half-smothered ejaculation escaping him. Her fingers were in his hair, her voice beseeching:

"Don't, don't, Dick! You mustn't feel it so—it won't be so hard after a while. Yes, my fault was the greater—I am stronger than you. But, if we help each other and are strong now, perhaps the reverence we had for each other, the beauty and the purity, will come back. Yes, it *must* come back—don't you think it must?—Tell me you think so. I will do anything—anything you ask of me, only not this. You won't ask it again, will you?—Say it, dear, that you won't. What? I can't hear—you won't promise? Oh, Dick!" a long-drawn wail, and then the moans and incoherent words again, the tones always of pleading, of fear, and of pain.

At last daylight brought Marian and his release from this unforgettable night; in which, with the clear eyes of a great sympathy and a great self-reproach, he saw again what few



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men ever see : man's lust that is woman's agony.

For another week the fever burned high, while the flame of Claire's life burned very low, and Mrs. Mills had to take her turn in the grim struggle with death. Who can say which was the most potent factor in the victory finally won, the will behind those set, determined faces issuing, each in turn, with such clock-like regularity from the "isolated" room, or the youth and tenacious constitution of the body that lay so nearly exhausted within it? Certainly Claire's will had little to do with it; for, in the ensuing days of a prostration so great that she could hardly lift her hand, she had but one desire:— to sleep.

The first face that greeted her upon returning consciousness was the wholly strange one of Mrs. Mills; who, in reply to the dazed look of inquiry, told her that she had been ill, and, having fainted in her rooms the night before, Doctor Bonner and her cousin had brought her to the hospital; that her cousin was taking care of her, but, having been up the entire night, had now gone for some sleep. Which announcement left Claire not at all certain that any of it made any real difference. As the delirium did not return by evening, when Rathbone arrived to relieve Mrs. Mills, the latter stayed on until Marian came on duty; so that Claire knew

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nothing of the watcher of other evenings or the days that had passed—all of which they thought it better to keep from her.

One cold, clear morning, two weeks later, Marian followed Doctor Bonner out of the room, anxiously questioning:

“ She isn’t gaining as she should, is she? If we could only rouse her interest in something. She doesn’t seem to care about anything. She hasn’t asked for a thing, not even to know where she was; and when I told her, she only asked if Doctor Rathbone had been in the room. I thought it best to say no; since when, she has lapsed back into this unnatural torpor. It’s so wholly unlike her.”

“ Patience, my dear. There’s so much more behind this than the typhoid. It’s true, she is strong enough now to wake up a bit more. Perhaps—yes, I think I’ll get Marlitt to come in and look her over to-morrow.”

Returning to the room, Marian smiled a cheery response into the heavy-lidded eyes fixed upon her, looking abnormally big and black above the hollow, white cheeks. Sitting upon the edge of the bed and fondling the thin hand that was wont to be so firm and active, now lying limply relaxed, she asked:

“ Isn’t there anything you’d like to have, Claire dear; or anything you’d like to know? ”

“ No, thank you.” The listless voice played

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upon an oversensitive chord in Marian, who too impulsively responded:

"Oh, it's almost as if you didn't want to get well."

The tightly closed lips in the white face gave forth no words; but the answer found its way to Marian, none the less, and she knew that she herself had spoken it. To recover her composure she left the room, and encountered Rathbone, on the way from his operating-room, who stopped to ply her with the usual questions. After hearing her report, he said:

"I wonder if I could rouse her a bit. Ask her if she'll see me."

Marian returned with an affirmative answer, and then took herself off to the nurses' quarters.

A little color came into Claire's face as the strong fingers closed over hers and the deep tones—she had always loved the organ-like quality of his voice—caressed her with:

"*Armes, kleines Kind, wie geht's Dir?*"

Marian's heart would have bounded with joy could she have heard the old note of raillery in Claire's voice as she said:

"*Sehr hungrig, danke schön*—and without any exercise, too. How do you account for that, *Herr Doktor?*"

"Same old feminine perversity, of course."

Ignoring his reply, she went on: "If you

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have any authority in this establishment of yours, will you please order your cook to send me up something palatable instead of these pale messes that Marian, who has developed into the most awful martinet, takes a cowardly advantage of my feebleness to force down my throat."

"Being the veritable little anarchist that you are, I suppose it will not be of the slightest use to tell you that, being Doctor Bonner's patient, and not mine, it would be a heinous breach of professional etiquette to do any such thing; so I'll add that, having a purely selfish interest in the prolongation of your life, I'll do nothing of the sort."

"So you, too, are in this conspiracy to bully me. But you always did, from the very first day on the *Kronprinz*. And I wonder why I'm always so meek with you."

He raised his eyebrows in amused amazement. "I hadn't been aware of this excess of compliance. But, if you ever have been docile under my commands—and I don't remember it—it was, of course, because I was in the right and you were in the wrong."

"Oh, the complacency of the man! And do you think it right to tell untruths to a helpless, bedridden person?"

"I'm not aware, either, of having done that."

"I didn't say that you had; I was just won-

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dering if you would—if you'd have to, being in the conspiracy. Marian and Mrs. Mills have been doing it quite shamelessly, and flattering themselves that I don't see clean through them."

"You black-eyed witch! Have you second sight? Else how do you know it?"

"Because I know I've been much too weak to have been ill only as slightly, and for as short a time as they've tried to make me believe. As it didn't make enough difference, however, to bother them about it, I didn't tell them that I knew they were horrid prevaricators. But—I don't want *you* to tell me lies," her tone growing so wistful that he hastily assured her that she might trust him.

"And will you tell me—did I come near dying?"

"Terribly near it," all the raillery gone from his voice.

"What a pity!"

"But we saved you."

"I mean, that is, the—but will you tell me what has been the matter with me?"

"Yes; you've had typhoid fever."

"Then I must have been unconscious, perhaps for days, and—you say '*we* saved you.' Were you with me sometimes, too?—And how many others?" and she tried vainly to keep the anxiety out of her voice.

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"Only Mrs. Mills and I," he answered, with apprehension of her next question.

"You mean that *you* stayed with me?"

"Yes, evenings; for Miss Leighton had to sleep, you know, and Mrs. Mills took you for the afternoons—your life depended upon very careful nursing. I've done the same thing many a time, when my patients have been in a critical state. These young nurses—well, older heads are better."

"But I'm not your patient—you did it for friendship. Thank you for that."

She said it so wearily and perfunctorily that he began to feel his resources bankrupt. No longer disguising the feeling that he had been holding back, he gave it full play, answering:

"It *was* friendship; and that made it a privilege and pleasure. But do we not—Miss Leighton and I—deserve a little more evidence from you that you want to stay with us, who have tried so hard to keep you?"

"Indeed I'm not ungrateful: you must not think that. But you cannot know——" She broke off, noting his eyes averted for the first time, while into her own crept the hunted look as she asked: "Have I been delirious?"

"Yes," he admitted, miserably reluctant, his eyes coming back to her face now averted from him. Then impetuously: "You have let me

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know some very beautiful and some very sad things about yourself, but, believe me, only what has made me want you more than ever for my friend; for it has shown me that you and I have put ourselves in a class apart, in a certain sense. Some day I want to tell you of an event in my life that your suffering may enable you to pity me for—and your pity will, I hope, help to wipe away some of the stain of it in your eyes. You gave love's tribute only where you loved, while I——”

“You remember what we agreed,” she stopped him: “that it's only what we are that counts, not what we've been. And I know well that whatever the deed—your deed—may have been, the stain has been wiped out long since by all the good you have done.”

“You sweet child! You would help me, I see, to wipe it out even from my own eyes; which, I fear, is not possible. Perhaps, though, we can help one another to lessen painful memories: shall we try? But first, you must get stronger.”

“Yes,” she agreed, extending her hand, “in more ways than one, ere I can help you who are so strong and self-reliant. It will be you who will continue to help me for many a day to come.”

“Always, where I can,” came his glad response, as he took her hand in both of his.

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"And now you'll make more effort to get well, won't you?"

"I suppose I must," with a smile so sad that it made him wince. "You make it seem so ungrateful and cowardly not to."

"Ah, not only for that reason! But because—come!" he called out in answer to a knock, proving to be an urgent summons that compelled him to leave her with a hasty, "Until another time."

Late the same afternoon, while Marian was out for her walk, a nurse brought in a box of roses and a note.

"Doctor Rathbone's chauffeur has just left these for you, Miss Raymond. Shall I put the flowers in water?"

As she went in search of a vase, Claire opened the note containing these lines:

"To kill me they strangled you, ye singing birds of my hopes; yea, after you my dearest ones, wickedness always shot arrows to hit my heart! . . .

"Yea, thou still art for me the destroyer of all graves! All hail unto thee my will! Only where there are graves are there resurrections."

Do you know these lines of Nietzsche's? The last has always been a favorite of mine. Will alone once enabled me to surmount a great despair. Yours will do the same for you. Be patient as you are strong, and birds of hope will sing for you again.

Your friend,

JOHN RATHBONE.

IX

CLAIRE made a vigorous protest against seeing Doctor Marlitt. "As if I hadn't enough of you already to give me nervous prostration," she battled humorously for exemption from doctors when Bonner came in to see her the next morning.

"What shall we do with her?" he asked, turning to Mrs. Mills, who had come in with him.

"She seems so much better to-day that perhaps she doesn't need him. Suppose we reserve it as a penalty for not showing marked improvement every twenty-four hours."

"A capital idea! I leave her in your hands, Mrs. Mills."

"Are you too busy to stay and chat with me a while?" Claire asked Mrs. Mills when the doctor had left.

"Just now I am. But I'll come back later, if you want me to."

"Please do."

In the strong face and quiet dignity of this woman Claire felt a sense of power and equilibrium that attracted her strongly. The deep-

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set gray eyes always met hers with a level, concentrated gaze that connoted interest and dependableness. She not only felt her secret to be safe with her, but that it had inspired a deeper and more personal sympathy, for which she felt intensely grateful.

In about half an hour Mrs. Mills came back laughing. "One of our patients," she explained, "who is almost well, has been feeling highly offended because Doctor Rathbone hadn't been in to see her for two days running. We have just been making our rounds, and she must have heard us coming, for, as we reached her door—which was open—she kept her head turned towards the window. I wish you could have seen the doctor's face. With that expression he always looks exactly like a naughty boy bent on mischief. He stood in the doorway an instant, and then said, 'Do you know you would be a handsome woman if you didn't look so cross.' Of course she had to laugh; and that was all the visit she had this morning, either. Poor fellow! he's worn out to-day. One of his patients—not here—has just died; and he always takes it so hard, almost as if he were to blame for it. He feels so deeply for others that it's a marvel he doesn't wear himself out."

"You admire him very much, don't you?" Claire asked with the simple directness which had in turn won Mrs. Mills' liking.



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“More than any man I’ve ever known. I never knew another so unselfish and so helpful.”

“Please tell me more of him.”

“If you’ll promise not to tell him. He hates to have his good deeds spoken of as much as if they were something to be ashamed of: and he says that I idealize him so that I don’t see him at all as he is. The truth is that there’s no one else who’s had the opportunities that I have of knowing his goodness. From hundreds of women, whom he has helped in one way or another, I’ve had practical demonstration of his wide sympathies, influence, and generosity. He will never allow them to thank him, if he can help it, and so they pour their gratitude into my approving ear. How far-reaching his influence is, is best shown, perhaps, in his treatment of the women of the prostitute class. We have a good many of them here, and, I think, I’m not exaggerating when I say that he wins over three out of five of them to happier lives. To begin with, he gets their confidence by treating them with the same deference that he shows to all women. With most of them, he considers that the chief malefactor is the man, and that it is he who deserves ostracism far more than she. I overheard a young house-physician that we once had here say to him that he believed all of these women were inherently bad. Almost

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the only thing that angers the doctor is injustice, and this was so sweepingly unjust that he turned upon him and gave that young man a rating which I think he'll never forget. I wish you could have heard it. He asked him how he dared to judge them without knowing all the conditions from beginning to end; or if many of them, before they sold themselves for money, might not first have given themselves for love at a cost which they alone could ever know. This we have learned often is the case." The steady gray eyes did not waver as she said this, nor as she continued: "He gives them sympathy for what they have received only brutality and censure, and shows his faith in the good that he believes to be in them all."

"And you?" questioned Claire, eagerly.

"Why, I agree with him, of course."

"How splendid you both are! Life seems so much more worth living to me for having known you." And the tears, which she no longer made any effort to hold back, brimmed over.

The older woman's heart went out to her youth and pain. "You poor girl!" she exclaimed: "I'm afraid that you, too, have seen too much of the heartless side of human nature. I'm so glad your path has crossed John's; for he'll teach you what, just now, perhaps, you most need to know:—that every true man, as well as every woman who has ever loved a man

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more than herself, could feel only sympathy and indignation for you if they knew what you have told us. And you must not mind our knowing; for you feel sure, don't you, that it has won our deep sympathy, and that none shall ever hear of it from either of us! "

" Yes, quite sure: " the tears still quietly falling, " and how can I ever thank you both for your goodness to me? "

" Sympathy should surely entail no obligation, any more than the air we breathe. Nearly everyone who has lived through some great sorrow or physical suffering, and surmounted it, comes to understand this—and many more things which the others never do. And they are the ones who, like John Rathbone, have learned the true instead of the orthodox values of life, and, through the sympathy that is understanding, exemplify one of life's best possibilities. Long ago I ceased to believe in the so-called sympathetic nature. Genuine sympathy is a thing that must develop like self-control and executive ability, and can do so only through experience. So, of course, the more deeply one has lived the greater is one's capacity for it. Altruism—I mean that which is not exploitation for self-glorification—is but bitter personal knowledge of pain that can detect it beneath almost any surface, and *must* do what it can to relieve it, if only to enable one to live at peace

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with oneself. I sometimes think that love is just knowing and selfishness just lack of comprehension."

"You talk so exactly like Doctor Rathbone," admired Claire.

"I only wish I could; and still more, love like him. As did Christ, he gives impartially to all."

"And belongs to none," Claire supplemented; the thought illuminating the perspective of the past year. For the first time she saw its true proportions: saw herself in chains; fettered to a man; in bondage to her own passion. "It is freedom, isn't it?" she asked, eagerly.

"Yes, freedom to serve the god within. John would call it giving expression to one's genius—creating an immortality for good, for that our every act has unlimited radiation and never-ending vibration."

"Ah, I see what he means now. I didn't understand when he told me that everyone possessed genius and created his own immortality. And oh, how blind I have been! how totally blind!"

"To be young is to be blind, my dear, and 'knowing,' the greatest compensation that the years bring." She rose. "I must go now. You don't mind staying alone until Miss Leighton comes in?"

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"No, indeed, for you have given me a great deal to think about. Thank you; you help me very much."

Twilight crept into the room; the flowers filled it with their fragrance; and there stole over the wearied spirit a peace such as it had not known for many months. At last she had found something to strive for, something nobly worthy of attainment. She closed her eyes and dreamily, almost happily repeated: "'Freedom to serve the god within.'" Could she attain it? He had said he would help her . . . and he was so strong. . . .

When Marian came back the half-moon, dipping to the edges of the roofs, shone in upon a placid, sleeping face. Tiptoeing to the window, she drew down the blind.

X

WHEN Claire was able to be moved, a month in the country being advised, Alfred had come forward with an offer of a small staff of servants to open Beechwood for her. To this she would not consent, but, at his earnest solicitation, compromised with the acceptance of one to help the English gardener and his wife take care of them at the lodge; where a suite of rooms was always kept in readiness for the "master," who was wont to come at an hour's notice and at any season. Though his offer had emanated from the impersonal generosity that was Alfred's finest characteristic, Claire could but accept it as personal; and from that time on Alfred began to find a new sweetness in her, having deflected her "crypticisms" from himself effectually and permanently.

The pure, bracing air, fresh country food, and long, quiet nights, brought back her strength so rapidly that each day the afternoon walk lengthened, until the glowing sunsets of a late and sunny winter faded to their dying tints ere Marian could get her back to tea beside the big log fire.

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A cold, gray morning, followed by the year's first snow, brought the dusk and tea an hour earlier than usual. As the firelight played over Claire's face, faithful Marian contemplated it with a sigh of satisfaction. The friend she loved looked the acme of lazy contentment, lying upon a couch drawn up at right angles with the fireplace; her patient she had nursed back to health. With a merry smile Claire met her gaze as she asked:

"What do you suppose Doctor Rathbone would say to us were he to walk in and see us wantonly indulging in this 'abomination of women's habits,' not to mention 'appetite annihilation'! I wish that some heaven-sent poison might annihilate mine. This makes my third scone. Um, but they're good!"

Reverting to Rathbone, Marian replied: "He'd probably sit down and have a cup with us. His sense of humor is far too keen to allow him to insist that it was doing you any harm now—looking as you do."

"A Sybarite doesn't express what I have sunk to—it's a glutton, a pure sensualist. And the worst of it is that I've not the stirring of a desire to be anything else. I'd just like to go on this way indefinitely: sleeping like a log o' nights; drinking quarts of this delicious cream," and she poured some into her cup, "and the still more delicious air; taking our

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long tramps, always east—it's so stupid of you ever to want to go west—to come back straight into the setting sun. I love the black branches against the saffron and mauve tints, with the evening star shining above them like a great lustrous jewel, and then to come home to this friendly old fire in which, while you're making tea, I see alluring visions of—scones."

"They're no black branches this evening," said Marian, peering out of the window; "they're all white with snow. It's beautiful, Claire; do come and look."

"I'm so comfy I wouldn't move to see the Queen of Sheba herself."

A man's voice startled them, saying, "I wouldn't, either; for I've always been certain that she was a greatly over-rated person." Marian whirled around from the window and Claire sat bolt upright, as Mr. Hawkes, smiling, handsome, and entirely at his ease, walked into the room. After shaking a perfunctory hand from Marian and, by the strength of his wrist, almost forcing Claire back into her reclining position, he continued: "You must not get up, you look altogether too comfortable." Drawing a chair up to the fire, he went on: "I came over with a commission from Mrs. Fanshawe to your gardener, whom I met on the drive, and learning that you were here, unable to resist the pleasure of paying my respects to the in-

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valid, I came on to the house to present my card in due form. Your front door standing hospitably open, after having rung the bell twice and received no answer, I entered. Hearing voices, I deposited my wet coat on an inviting chest and came in this direction, when—the temptation to see if I could accomplish what the Queen of Sheba couldn't, brought me in upon you in this unceremonious fashion. For which, *mesdames*, please accept my humblest apologies."

"We'll do better than that: Marian will give you a cup of tea and I a scone that will almost make you believe yourself in Merrie England—they're made by one of your countrywomen. But tell us what brought you to Lenox at this season."

"A house-party at The Gables. Mrs. Fanshawe's immensely fond of the country in winter and often, with a few kindred spirits, runs up here for a fortnight. But tell me, Miss Leighton, how your patient is?"

"Look at her," said Marian, her face relaxing.

"She certainly looks awfully fit. But how could she help it in so salubrious an environment and with you to look after her?"

Marian's face became wooden again. "My looking after her has had little to do with it here."

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"Is she as obstreperous a patient as that would imply?"

Claire answered for herself: "I fear I am—that I possess an unwholesome amount of woman's fabled perversity; for the moment I'm told that I *must* do a certain thing, I'm filled straightway with an unholy desire to do just the reverse."

"Perhaps it is rather the love of freedom—the right of every free-born woman—rebellious against coercion."

"Listen to that, Marian! Sir Walter Raleigh, Buckingham, and Bayard rolled into one would be nothing compared with him. Certainly superman, not to mention our enfranchisement, is in sight when one of the brawnier sex calls it love of freedom—the refusal to gratify his every whim, which our lords and masters have for so long been calling woman's perversity."

But Marian was not listening. She had gone out of the room to see why the front door had been left open. As the man looked into the mobile face with its sensitive mouth, the expression of which could change so rapidly from sweet to stern, sad to merry, now wholly in accord with the luminous eyes dancing with fun, he remembered a description an artist had once given of the face in one of his portraits: "Not beautiful, but full of beauty; a face that

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one never tires of watching, and the sort I love best to paint." Comparisons with another face, unquestionably beautiful in its penumbra of golden hair, were inevitable. Searching the charming imperfections of the one for a clearer understanding of his growing weariness of the very flawlessness of the other, his glib tongue failed him, until, his concentrated gaze having made her flush, he remembered the conventions and said:

"I was just wondering where your vulnerable spot might be in case one wanted to storm—your prejudices. I see that one would have to use very different methods from those which ordinarily prove efficacious with your sex, but with you would doubtless result in a deflagration that might consume the offending man."

"Beware!" Claire continued the jest; "for I am horribly combustible, and at the same time possess the phoenix' magic power of rising uninjured from the flames. And worse still, I've not the slightest objection to seeing the offending man consumed outright. But suppose we stop talking nonsense and you give us some news of the outside world. I'm a little hungry for some of the music."

"Why not make your own? Mrs. Lawrence got an exceptionally beautiful new Steinway last summer."

Marian returned at this moment, and Claire

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assailed her: "Marian, you wretch, never to have told me that it was there!"

"There's my obstreperous patient for you, Mr. Hawkes! I didn't tell her because I knew that she would be up there before she was half strong enough for any—of her kind of playing."

"I'll have Doyle build fires there the first thing in the morning," Claire jubilated.

"And might a despised man toast his toes over one of them if he were to drop in upon you there?"

"Awful thought! don't you dare! You must wait until I've done at least a week's practicing—if only because I bear the hall-mark of my teacher's fame and must not do him discredit."

He rose to leave. "Mrs. Fanshawe has some good things for four hands up here: may I bring them over some morning?"

"I'd enjoy it very much," Claire answered; the anticipatory zest of it causing her to display a cordiality that set Marian to girding after he had gone.

"How *can* you be so effusive to him, when you neither like nor trust him?"

"I'm not quite certain if I don't—or do. But," the omnivorous artist put forth her claim, "I believe he can play, and doing four hands is not only great fun, but good practice. He evi-

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dently uses Mabel; I'll undertake a family vendetta and use him." Jumping up in her old restless way she stooped over the back of Marian's chair, throwing an arm about her neck. "You phlegmatic old Puritan! I can hardly wait to get my fingers on those keys."

"But you just said—before he came in—that you wanted nothing but this quiet life."

"Ah, it was just sleeping—until it got rested—or something woke it up. It's the biggest part of me, Marian,—my music. It draws me like a lodestone, always. Without it, for any length of time, I can find no rest."

"And, yet, you didn't find peace in it."

"Not yet," lines of pain forming in her forehead; "but—don't make me think of these things. It's so good just to feel well again and to really want to do something."

Marian drew down her face and kissed it. "And I'm so glad to have you, dear, that I'll go and look up Doyle this minute and tell him about the fires."

Occupation, perhaps an incentive to it, she knew that Claire needed; but, as the days went by, the realization of how much of the last Mr. Hawkes was supplying caused her no little uneasiness. Mrs. Fanshawe having returned to town, he had moved to "Curtis's"; Mrs. Fanshawe's "things" for four hands having been exhausted, he sent to the city for more. While

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they were going over the last installment one afternoon, Marian dropped in upon them, her uneasiness developing into active fear as she watched them. The man played, as he seemed to do everything else, with ease and brilliancy. The four hands responded as if to one brain; the two faces wore a like expression of absorbed exaltation. Here she recognized one of the strongest bonds of human sympathy: mutual comprehension of, and participation in, a loved art. She recalled Claire's first judgment of him as "dangerous"; and realized that the flattery of such a man's undisguised, probably purposely exaggerated, admiration might prove doubly so to the hypersensitive nature so recently wounded to the quick in both heart and *amour propre*. If this were the remedy needed, why not Rathbone? reasoned wily Marian; and a note went to him the same night. But, ere his reply came, Hawkes had himself supplied the motive for flight.

The following morning Claire had braved a driving storm for her morning's practice. The afternoon bringing no diminution of the steady downpour, she wandered restlessly about the house until after tea, when, declaring that she could not "stand it another moment," she had donned mackintosh and rubbers and again waded up to the house on the hill.

Doyle opened the door to her, saying, "Mr.

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Hawkes is upstairs, Miss." Which fact announced itself from the piano. The broken chords of a something unfamiliar, yet hauntingly suggestive of some latter-day composer in its unmelodic theme, drew her towards the drawing-room door, just outside of which she dropped noiselessly into a chair; her wonder at the power and beauty of his rendering growing with every bar.

When he stopped she broke in upon him, admiration struggling with indignation. "Why haven't you let me know that you could play like this? It was taking an unfair advantage. But it was exquisite. And what was it—I don't seem to know it? Is it Debussy?"

He had risen and, bringing his heels together, made the exaggerated Continental bow.

"'Tis my own humble effort, *à votre service, Mademoiselle.*"

"You don't mean to tell me that you yourself did it—composed that!"

Her eyelids opening wide, giving her the expression of a bewildered child, made him laugh, and he mimicked:

"No; but I myself improvised it."

"Then you're—why, if you can do things like that," her thought leaping ahead of her discretion, "why aren't you doing something with it, instead of——?" She stopped and he supplied:

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"Being a useless dilettante. Probably because of the devil of laziness that has always stood between me and—the *Légion d'Honneur*, of course."

"You might truly have said achievement," she said, gently; a suggestion of pain in his self-mockery revealing the pity of it—the discrepancy between his abilities and his pursuits.

Her tone made him restive, almost resentful, until, encountering her eyes, he saw in them only a disarming sympathy. With the simplicity of a genuine humility he said:

"Don't waste your pity on me; I'm not worth it;" and there came into his face a something of spiritual beauty that she had not seen in it before.

They had approached the fire. Pointing to the dying embers, he said, sadly: "I'm like them, burned out."

Impulsively her hand went out to his shoulder. "The ashes may be there, but the flame is certainly not smothered—yet; it only needs a little fanning."

"Will you fan it for me?" he asked, eagerly, his fingers closing tightly over hers; his eyes looking greedily down upon her.

Could she ever encounter that look in a man's eyes again without fear and loathing? She

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snatched her hand from his with such unmistakable repulsion that he quickly realized his mistake.

"Forgive me!" he stammered. "Your sympathy was too much for me; but please don't withhold it. Do you not see how much I need the sympathy—the friendship of a woman like you?"

"I must get back for dinner," she answered, coldly.

He left her at the door with a forced gaiety in his *Au revoir*; angry with himself for his *faux pas*; fearful of having lost her confidence.

Marian handed her a letter as she came in, the address of which, in Rathbone's firm round hand, affected her like a draught of pure oxygen after the inhalation of a poisonous gas. She rapidly absorbed the contents and handed it back, saying, "Read the last page." It ran:

The power of nature's gentle hand to soothe the spirit's pain and cure the sick body is abundant; but now that it has healed you, do you not feel the call of the vibrant, hurrying crowd; crave once more to enter the impetuous race, shoulder to shoulder—nay, pulse to pulse, with your fellows; to feel every throb of their gladness and strength, no less than their weakness and pain? Come back, little friend. Life needs its music of sympathy, and your city needs you.

Treulich,
JOHN RATHBONE.

Her own pulse beating faster, Marian asked:
"Shall we go?"



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“Let’s pack this minute,” came the impulsive response.

“Well, let’s eat our dinner first,” laughed Marian.

The next evening they were at The Studios.

XI

THE days that followed were passed in the hundred details of "getting settled"; and not until it was accomplished, and Marian had gone to a more needy patient, did Claire have an opportunity for reflection. Then the ghouls of memory came to haunt her loneliness. During her convalescence she had put Dick Wall from her thoughts by sheer force of will. A perfunctory note, the belated answer to a letter she had written him before her illness, was forwarded to her at Lenox. She did not reply to it and had received no word from him since. She still tried not to think of him; but it was of no use, he was a problem that had to be solved. When at last she gave herself up to it, it was, she thought, to find that her love for him was wholly dead.

Treading upon the heels of her heartbreaking disillusionment, the seeming defection of Mr. Hawkes affected her out of all proportion to its extent. An experience which had shaken the very foundation of her life should have taught her, she reasoned, to beware of all men. For that which men called love she had come to

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conceive a loathing; her whole experience of it having been one long revelation of ugliness, sickening in its repetition and similarity. Instead of her dream of it: the fulfillment of craving for sympathy, companionship, and beauty, she had ever found what seemed love's very antithesis. It assumed the aspect of a merciless monster of appetite, heedless alike of repulsion or despair. In the intensity of her revulsion of feeling from man as merely human male, she even feared to see Rathbone again, lest he too should fail in friendship and, in some unguarded moment, she should see the stealthy beast creep into his eyes. In those first weeks of her convalescence she had come to regard her dearest idols as shattered, and had buried them beneath the ruins of an inevitable past. But her healthier condition of mind now enabled her to apprehend that to linger amid ruins was suicide. Having renounced love, she resolved to crush out the craving for it; forget the dream in work. With which resolution she planned her days, filling each hour with its appointed task—six, sometimes seven at the piano, and, for the rest, anything to stifle thought: but she had failed to take into account the important factor of physical endurance, of which she still possessed an all too limited amount. Within a fortnight of putting into practice her strenuous regimen her back began

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to ache, and next her eyes, from reading lying down because she was too tired to sit up, much less go out. Baffled by the maddening consciousness of her physical impotence, she had thrown herself down upon the window-seat late one afternoon to battle with the malevolent destiny that seemed to pursue and foil her at every turn. The lights were beginning to flash out their evening greeting to her from the nearby high buildings; which, with their ugly—almost shamelessly bare, brick walls towering above the surrounding houses and depriving them of their light and air, seemed to her bitter mood fitting monuments to the perverted ideals of a plutocracy. They spoke to her of the men who were everywhere filching their happiness at the expense of another's; of the fierce daily struggle for place, in which the unselfish were forced to the wall along with the weak; of the nightly revulsion of the senses—the spring of the monster of appetite, and the anguished souls of women crying in the wilderness for mercy, for love. With Hilda Wangel she asked herself why she, too, should not turn bird of prey. As if in answer to her question the telephone bell rang. It proved to be Mabel, whom Claire had supposed to be still at the Virginia Hot Springs, where she had gone to recuperate from what had been given out as an “attack of influenza.”

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“ That you, Claire? ”

“ Why, Mabel! when did you get back? ”

“ The first of the week, thank heaven! ”

“ Didn’t you enjoy it? And aren’t you better? ”

“ Feel like the devil most of the time, thank you. But we’ll talk of that later. I want you to help me out at the Philharmonic to-night. Alfred absolutely refuses to go; I’ve asked two men, and, you see, I can’t show myself alone with them—you understand? ”

“ That I’m to play gooseberry. I’d play almost anything to-night from the races to roulette, so—bored am I too.”

“ Well, then, I’ll call for you at twenty minutes past eight.” Which Claire knew full well that she would not do. To arrive before a concert began was to Mabel a wasted opportunity of making her appearance when, the first number having begun and the house being quiet, her advent would not be overlooked: and Mabel never missed such opportunities.

Claire’s apprehensions were realized, the concert having already begun when they reached the Hall. In the corridor, through the partly opened door of their box, the exquisite melody of Beethoven’s *C minor Symphony*—that voice of an infinite tenderness, reached them distinctly. As Mabel started to enter Claire put her hand on her arm, whispering:

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"Please, Mabel, wait until the movement is finished—it's Beethoven."

"One might think it was the Holy Ghost the way you act," irritably retorted Mabel, raising rather than lowering her voice, and pushing open the door, went in.

The two men seated in the box, one of whom was Hawkes, were compelled to rise. From the two front chairs the programs had to be removed. One of them, slipping through Hawkes' fingers, fluttered down upon the head of an irate woman below; and Mabel achieved her purpose: she had disturbed the entire house.

From his seat in the parquet Rathbone had seen and fumed at the interruption, his wrath simmering until the end of the movement enabled it to boil over. Turning to his companion, Doctor Marlitt, he said:

"This makes the third time that I've seen that blond doll disturb an entire audience. What, in the name of reason, do you suppose brings that sort of woman to hear good music?"

"The most reasonable thing in the world, my dear fellow," answered his friend; "that all-pervasive desire of woman to focus the attention of man, either as individual or multitude, upon herself."

"Who is she?" growled Rathbone; then, his

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disgust changing suddenly to pleasure: " And if there isn't my little friend, Claire Raymond, with her! "

Doctor Marlitt having informed him that the beautiful Mrs. Lawrence, famous for her jewels, her chef, and her sharp tongue, was one of his patients, they took advantage of the intermission to pay them a visit.

Liking nothing better than to be surrounded by distinguished men, Mabel received them with her most gracious smile. Although she had not met Rathbone, she knew of his reputation. Greetings and introductions over, Doctor Marlitt, who had known Hawkes in Paris, dexterously drew him into his conversation with Mabel; thereby leaving the chair behind Claire's vacant for Rathbone, who was by no means slow in availing himself of it. He opened the conversation with a volley of questions that gave her a moment in which to collect herself, having just had to dodge a somewhat similar broadside from Hawkes; who, but the moment before, had been professing himself as deeply wounded by her having left Lenox without a word of explanation to him then or since. The bird of prey had but played with him; but, under the fire of this man who had done her no wrong, it was anything but a bird of prey which, with never a flap of its poor little pinions, fell at the first volley. Why, he wanted to know,

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had she not let him know of her return? And what business had she not to be looking better than she was?

She had but to look at him, to hear his voice, and her eyes dropped beneath his searching gaze for very shame of the doubts of him which she had allowed her mind to harbor. The nights he had watched with her fighting for her life, and his never-failing delicacy and thoughtfulness from the first time that he had spoken to her, rose up to name her ingrate. She, who so hated ingratitude, had been guilty of it towards one of the best friends that she had ever had. Her impulsiveness, in its desire to make amends, rushed towards self-immolation. Her words issued turbulently, lest her courage fail and she shirk the exposure of her sin against him.

“ I didn’t let you know because of a reason which makes me unworthy of your respect, much less your friendship.”

“ So bad as that, is it? You’ll have to tell me what it is, and let me judge. Let me see—I think I’ve nothing on, as yet, for to-morrow night that will keep me from coming to find out. May I? ”

“ Please do, and oh! I do hope you’ll be able to forgive me.”

“ Can you doubt it? ” he answered, lowering

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his voice. "Do you think friendship so fragile a thing as that?"

"But that is just what I have done!" she wailed—"doubted your friendship; and after all you've done for me."

"I'm sorry," he answered, after an instant's hesitation; "but, perhaps, you had cause of which I do not know." He turned to Doctor Marlitt. "We must be getting back to our places, Jim."

Although he repeated his intention of "looking her up" the following evening, she watched his broad shoulders disappear through the door with sinking spirits; realizing that she had inflicted upon this royal heart the sting of unappreciated service, of which she had had such agonizing experience; his magnanimity but intensifying her remorse.

Hawkes repossessing himself of his seat behind her, under cover of the babel of voices about them, continued his plea where Rathbone's entrance had cut it off.

"Perhaps," he hazarded, "I did deserve punishment for showing my feelings too plainly; but, perhaps, you misjudged that feeling."

Almost abject in her humble and dejected mood, she admitted that she might have done so, and when he followed up his advantage with a further plea for a chance to prove it, she granted it; asking herself, in the extremity of

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her self-reproach, what right she had to condemn anyone.

“ And when may I come? ” he continued, puzzled by the sudden change in her demeanor.

“ I’ve no engagements after to-morrow evening. Call me up when you feel like coming; ” and she gave him her telephone number.

The concert over, while helping her into her cloak, he noted her look of fatigue, and said solicitously :

“ You don’t look nearly so fit as you did at Lenox. Aren’t you feeling well? ”

“ I’m tired, and, ” as he followed her into the corridor, “ perhaps dull. I’ve been working too hard; and all work and no play—you know. I’ve just been proving that only the very strong of body, as well as mind, can pursue that uncompromising Spartan course. Don’t you believe so? ” she put the question wistfully, feeling the need of corroboration, “ that one *must* have some of the stimulus of joy and pleasure, just to keep going? ”

“ Indeed I do, ” he answered, his voice taking a caressing tone. “ And now that Miss Leighton has left you it must be very lonely for you. Please trust me, won’t you, and let me help a little? ”

She gave him a swift look; but the handsome face betrayed only sympathy and earnestness. He, too, was heaping fiery coals upon her head.

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If they did not burn as Rathbone's had done, they yet aroused her generosity; and recalling their last conversation, she answered impulsively:

"It's good of you; and I hope we may be able to help each other—at any rate we can try;" giving him her hand, as Mabel stepped into her brougham. The latter, after having taken an exaggeratedly cordial leave of the other man, deigned only to bestow upon Hawkes a curt nod that brought a cynical smile to his lips, as he stood with uncovered head while the spirited horses plunged forward and the Hall's enormous liveried negro bellowed out the next number, to the peril of his and all other too imminent ear-drums.

Claire sensed one of Mabel's nasty moods in the concentrated spleen of her first remark:

"What an ill-bred boor your friend Doctor Rathbone is!"

"I probably owe him my life," Claire answered, simply, refusing discussion of him; and, Mabel lapsing into a sullen silence, made no further effort at conversation until they reached The Studios, when she expressed her thanks for a "most enjoyable evening."

"Yes, I noticed that you enjoyed the men," came Mabel's Parthian shot as the footman held the door open for Claire, who alighted without response. The black circles beneath her



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cousin's eyes she had seen too frequently beneath her own to place other than a charitable construction upon the irritability of which she knew that she was the present, because nearest, victim.

XII

FROM the excitement of the evening's two encounters and the subsequent effort to readjust her attitude towards these two men, Claire spent a restless night, a futile morning at the piano, and an afternoon of enforced rest preparatory to Rathbone's visit.

He arrived shortly after eight o'clock; the genial cordiality of his manner unchanged. Her nervousness was so apparent, however, that for some time he tactfully steered their conversation around all turbulent waters, intending to forego explanations until another time. But the shock of the plunge having fewer terrors for her than those which her active imagination would conjure up through prolonged anticipation of it, she seized upon the first pause.

"I want to tell you what a beast I've been—about what I told you last night—why I didn't answer your letter and let you know that I was home. And it's so hard to explain it to you."

"Then don't. Wait until you feel better—or perhaps, in time, it will explain itself."

"No, I want to tell you now. You see I live alone——"

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"You have not believed me bad enough to take advantage of that!" he stopped her.

"Every other man, not related to me, whom I have ever known well has done so, and always in the name either of love or friendship," her voice breaking. "But it never was either; it was always—oh, how can I make you understand! It made me come to fear all men; and I wanted your friendship so much—you had shown me how beautiful a thing it could be—and I had suffered so much, that I feared to let myself depend upon it lest it, too, might turn into—the other thing. But, please believe me, I never feared it when I was with you, nor now that I've seen you again; it was only when I didn't see you—just during the past few weeks, after I'd had yet another experience of a similar sort."

His momentary indignation vanished before the pathos of her confession combined with his still vivid recollection of her delirium's sadder revelations.

"You poor little thing! I think I understand."

"You always seem to—so wonderfully."

"All of us who have suffered deeply, and crave the best in life, understand one another, I think."

"Perhaps. But you, at any rate, make it easy to tell you—almost anything. And now

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I want to tell you how grateful to you I am for what you have done for me. Please wait," as he started to speak, "for you don't know all that I owe you. Mrs. Mills let me know that when I was delirious I told everything." Slipping down into her low chair, she shielded her face with one hand. "I'm glad that you know it all, otherwise I should feel that I was deceiving you; that you could not understand why I didn't want to get well. I had thought my life utterly wrecked; and it was you—you and Mrs. Mills—who showed me how blind and cowardly I'd been, by giving me a glimpse of a love so much greater than that which I'd thought my life wrecked for having to renounce, that—that—I want to fill my life only with this love from now on: the love of giving to all and belonging to none, which you most of all have shown me the beauty of."

"If I could have done that, I should have rendered you a service indeed. It is far more likely that your change of ideal has come through your suffering and renunciation. With your nature—your craving for the best, you had but to lose that which was the source of your happiness to begin to learn the vanity of happiness."

"I don't understand. Do you think happiness unbeautiful?"

"Generally very ugly. Think of the happy

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people you know. Aren't they all either stupid, ignorant, or selfish? "

After an instant's thought she looked up at him, bewilderment giving way to amusement as she had to acknowledge that they were, adding: " All except Marian."

" And did she ever tell you that she was happy? "

" I don't know that she ever did; but she must be, she's always so cheerful."

" From my knowledge of her, I should say that her cheer was rather the buoyancy of health, combined with the poise that is the result of strength of character and an absorbing occupation—an infinitely better thing than happiness; which I believe to be one of the most pernicious illusions that ever dulled man's vision; the pursuit of it being the cause of all crime and most of the world's pain."

" Isn't that rather sweeping? For instance, a starving man might commit a crime—steal food, and that wouldn't be in the pursuit of happiness."

" The state calls that a crime; I do not. If I'm not prepared to say that the starving man has the right to take by violence the means of subsistence denied him by the community in which he lives, I do say that the community has not the right to let him starve. Far more truly a crime is the happiness of the self-absorbed,

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which lets the bodies, minds, and hearts of others starve while it gluts itself with its own condition of complacent beatitude. What right, I say, has any man or woman to be happy until each has done his share to make the deletion of the wrong of the world, and its consequent misery, a fact and not a dream—even if, knowing of it, one *could* be happy? ”

“ But,” she persisted, “ suppose all of us did do our share; why might we not be happy then? ”

“ Because of the very constitution of our organisms and the disharmonies of their cravings. To mete out justice to your fellow-beings is a perennial denial of the desires of your own ego. As Ibsen has put it:

‘ To live, is to war with the fiends
That infest the brain and the heart.’

The grander the result of human endeavor, the greater the struggle always; and struggle is *not* happiness.”

“ It doesn’t seem like you to talk like this,” she reproached. “ I’d thought you so optimistic, and this sounds so—the reverse.”

“ It is generally held, I know, that to look at things as they are, instead of as we should like them to be, is pessimism. But I’ve found this method the very best way to avoid pessimism. And I’m talking to you ‘ like this ’ because I want to save you from any more of the

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disillusionments of happiness, by accepting it for what it is—this shibboleth of romanticism which the enlightenment of the age is stripping of its spurious wings along with those of the other angels of the heaven of bathos.”

“ But deprived of all hope of happiness, what is there left to strive for? ”

“ The strength to forego it.”

“ But that is only a negation.”

“ Precisely!—of a thing unfit to survive. But only from its disintegrating substance can evolve the affirmation of the right of each life to its chance of developing its best. How do you suppose justice ever can reign upon earth so long as we continue to seek individual happiness at the expense of universal well-being? And alas! like hungry wolves, men are everywhere in hot pursuit of this phantom. The lover thinks to clasp it in his love, the artist to lure it with the outward expression of his soul’s vision; the scientist expects to confer it upon mankind by his discoveries, the inventor with his devices for conserving human energy; the socialist sees it caged in his apotheosis of a terrestrial state, and the religious mystic in his materialization of an ethereal kingdom. But which of them overtakes it? I think it must dwell in ‘ the land of El Dorado, where it is impossible for anyone to go.’ ”

He glanced at the clock. “ There’s a much

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less attractive place to which I must be going; but first, I want to know why you're looking so tired."

"I suppose because I am," she answered, wearily. "I've been working too hard."

A few questions from him having elicited a confession of the heroic task she had set herself, he shook his head with the smile of an indulgent parent.

"And what an ignorant little girl it is, after all, not to know that such methods foredoomed you to failure! Will you let me suggest a regimen?"

"Yes. And yet, you say I'm not docile."

"Well then, you most improvident of foolish children, not a moment more than four hours' practice a day—for the present at least; an hour in the park each morning, and another in the afternoon, if you can manage it; and, for the rest, play at anything from which you can derive enjoyment. I wonder if it would give you pleasure to come over to the B. Hospital some afternoon and play for the patients. We're organizing a series of entertainments for them in our new solarium on the roof. It's a scheme of Marlitt's, who considers the killing of ennui an essential therapeutical factor."

"I'd love to!" she responded, with enthusiasm.

"That's first-rate! I'll tell Jim; he'll be

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delighted, and will let you know when to come. And now *try* and be less prodigal of your strength, won't you? "

" I'll be good," pursing her lips; the contrast between their assumption of demureness and the mutiny in her eyes making him laugh.

" If you didn't look so rebellious, I'd tell you to substitute milk for your coffee and tea." He had taken her hand and was examining it. " It's still too thin, you know, and we must take very good care of it; it can do such beautiful things."

When he had gone, she also fell to examining it, contrasting it with his, large, strong, and hairy; which, as her own had lain in it, she had had an almost uncontrollable desire to hold against her cheek—a mute avowal of appreciation, gratitude, and trust.



XIII

By acting upon Rathbone's advice, in a few weeks Claire began to acquire some physical endurance, and with it, a renewal of confidence in her powers. Feeding the birds and squirrels in the park she found to be so absorbing an occupation that the hours spent out of doors soon came to be a pleasure instead of a duty. Mrs. Mills, having sent a message through Rathbone, asking her to come and see her, she had gone and, ere long, the park by way of Sixtieth Street became a favorite route. The life of this woman, with its large sphere of influence, was a never-failing demonstration of inspiring possibilities to her. To drink from some fountain of strength being a necessity, and this one so safe, she drank deep of its stimulating waters.

Hawkes, also, was taken to visit the little feathered and furry friends. By a hundred thoughtful little attentions he had won a reprieve from her and, finally, a willingness to accept his invitations. He would take her to dine at odd little places in the French quarter, where no word of English was heard and the

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unhurried atmosphere and delicious coffee would tempt them to linger on until they would be late for their concert, or give up going altogether and return to the studio to make their own music. And always he was the sympathetic friend with knee ever ready to bend to sovereign womanhood. The more she saw of him the more he interested her. Wide reader and world rover, his versatile, restless mind had gathered a seemingly inexhaustible store of information and anecdote; the richest of material for the play of his subtle fancy and wit. Of himself he rarely spoke, and then but indirectly. Since the day of his *faux pas* at Lenox she seemed never to grip the man; her curiosity always slipped off the smooth, glittering surface.

Rathbone's visits were more infrequent. He spoke vaguely of being "mixed up" in a scheme of hospital construction that "ate up" his hours, and, she feared, his strength as well, he so often looked tired and worried. It was with a thrill of genuine happiness that she found her music could bring him rest; that, in some way, she could repay him. At times she would play for more than an hour, neither of them uttering a word until, rousing himself with an effort, he would say that he had stayed much too long, that she was bewitching him into forgetting all his obligations; making her

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laugh joyously at this proof of her power. Still further evidence of it she had with each of her afternoons at the hospital. To find that she could smooth out creases of pain from many a drawn, white face; to meet the smiles of pleasure and gratitude offering an unspoken thanks—from this came still another lesson in “possibilities.”

But yet, each day had its hours of loneliness and depression when, try as she might to shut them out, the questions would steal into her mind: Had Dick quite forgotten her? Had something happened to him? Or had he—could he—after what had been, desert her wholly? After which she would upbraid herself for lack of strength and self-respect, since she knew him now for what he was. But she had yet to drink the bitterest dregs of him.

Returning from the hospital late one afternoon, in exalted mood, she found his letter awaiting her. She had judged him too harshly; he had not forgotten. But to the opening lines her heart seemed to stop beating, and she moaned the words aloud: “I want you to be among the first to know”—*among* the first!—*among!*—*among!* After he had fed upon her heart—gnawed, tortured it, and then left her to heal the wounds as best she might, he would place her among the first to know of the great joy and happiness that had come to him in his

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engagement to his sister's friend, whom he had known and loved for years.

The cold brutality of it was as the knout upon quivering flesh. The knowledge that what she had been to him had not given her a place apart, was not a consecration even to memory, broke a part of her youth that bled to death in a single night. Only then did her love for him really die.

The days that followed she lived in a sort of stupor. An immediate reply to him of some sort seeming imperative, as if compelled by an entirely mechanical force, she wrote:

I hope that you may find in marriage its best possibilities of happiness and development.

CLAIRE.

To this he replied by asking why she had written him so briefly and sent his betrothed no word of any kind; adding, that unless she would be a friend to her, as well as to him, there could be nothing further between them, as his entire present and future belonged to the woman whom he had chosen.

That indelible "among" had left her no further capacity for feeling pain because of anything that he might do. This last announcement was but consistent with it, with the whole man; the poverty of whose nature was now clearly revealed to her. She could almost have pitied him had not a shrinking, as from a something

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dangerous and contaminating, begun to steal over her. Striving to overcome it, she forced herself to answer :

I am sorry that it is impossible for me to do what you ask. Of most of my own feelings in the matter it were better not to speak, there being sufficient reasons aside from them. The first is, that I will not be guilty of the meanness of offering friendship to any woman when I can only give her a shrinking tangle of subterfuge. The next is, that I no longer have any love to give you. I am sorry that this is so; but I cannot help it. It is not alone because of your acts, but, I now believe, fundamental differences of temperament. In character and beliefs we are totally unlike. My truth is not your truth; my love is not your love; and my religion is not your religion. Our entire point of view is so different, that when I tell you that you have done me one of the cruellest wrongs one human being can do another; that it should have entailed upon you an obligation to me that neither one, nor a thousand, legal wives could obliterate; that your past and present inability to apprehend this obligation, combined with the insincerity, cowardice, and heartlessness you have shown me—to know you capable of which has been the bitterest grief of all—has made it impossible for me longer to feel any better thing towards you than a pitying shrinking and disgust—when, I say, I tell you these things, I might as well be talking Sanscrit for all conviction of truth my words can carry to you. In them, I know, you'll be able to see only vindictiveness, a fatuous assumption of superiority, and altogether wrong, not to say morally perverted, ideas. There is but one thing that can open your eyes to what you have been and done, and that is to suffer as you have made me. Until you have—been made to suffer and renounce—your higher nature will remain atrophied. Its quickening is the one thing I now want of you; for this alone could revive any love and sympathy for you in my heart. If only to justify the past, I wish that this might some day be possible. But even though it never should, and the tie which united us continues to have no more meaning for you than it has at present, to me

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it must always be, not only sacred, but a bond so long as we both shall live. At the altar of our two souls I gave an oath to serve you for better, for worse. To break it would be to acknowledge that any act of yours could sully the purity of the love I gave you. That I may not do so, I will never be the first to break off all intercourse between us; and, with the will to be faithful, I may yet give you the service of friendship—if you want it. But to the woman you are going to marry I cannot offer it. Doubtless you will not want to see me again as I am unable to comply with your ultimatum; but if you do, do not come for a while—until I can overcome the shrinking I feel at the thought of seeing you. Believe me, until I can, you could derive no pleasure from seeing me, only a humiliation which I have no wish to inflict upon you. Try, at least, to believe that in telling you the truth I have not wanted to hurt you, but have done it that in perfect sincerity I might continue to be,

faithfully,

CLAIRE.

As the days, then the weeks, passed with no further word from him, the first renewal of strong feeling came to her in the form of intense relief—an exhilarating sense of freedom. The last link of the chain which had bound her heart, for years it might have been gauged by nights of tears and days of an utter hopelessness, had been broken.

XIV

IN a pale blue chiffon teagown, the exact shade of the damask of the furniture covering and hangings, a gold fillet encircling her golden head, Mabel looked the most priceless ornament of her white and gold boudoir as she sat before the fire, listlessly cutting the leaves of a magazine. The perfume of lilies-of-the-valley, several large bowls of which were placed about the room, made almost oppressive its overheated atmosphere—or so it seemed to Brooke Hawkes, as he came in from the chill dampness of the street.

Mabel did not rise to greet him, merely held out two fingers; over which he made an exaggeratedly low bow, saying, "And what have I done to win your displeasure, that you vouchsafe me but two of these lovely fingers?"

Snatching her hand away she answered, irritably: "You've certainly missed your vocation, Brooke, for you're a born actor. But I'm in no mood for this sort of thing to-day."

"Beastly weather, isn't it? Get's on one's nerves."

"Stop it, Brooke."

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"If we may not approach even so safe a topic as the weather, my dear Mabel, I fear I've chosen a bad time to come. Have you one of your headaches?" he added, with a show of sympathy.

"No, I've not. But I want to ask you some questions, and I want you to tell me the truth."

"You misjudge me sadly. I always tell the truth—the pleasant ones. To tell the unpleasant—that, *chère amie*, is *bourgeois*, not to say stupid."

"Not if one wants it."

"Does one ever? A few there may be who can stand it, but do even they like it?"

"As a family, we pride ourselves upon having the courage of truth," was her reply with a haughty uplift of the beautiful diademed head.

"To speak it," he supplemented. "You've given me somewhat painful verification of that fact upon occasion, and I must confess, you know, it does get on one's nerves at times."

"Of course, because it offends your vanity."

"Precisely." While his tones had lost none of their suavity, his smile was goading her to fury. "And also," he went on, "because of an inherent masculine antipathy to being bullied. This has been *our* privilege for so long that we're not yet ready to confer it upon woman. We still like to see her beautiful, you know."

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"Of course she must always be beautiful, and wholly self-effacing—a puppet to dance for you as you choose to pull the string. No matter what you do she must sympathize; if it be despicable she may not say so; if her heart is breaking she must smile and be amusing: and what she wants she must beg or lie for. To demand anything as her right——"

"Don't do that; it's fatal, my dear. But, on the other hand, men are putty in the hands of so beautiful a woman as you if——"

"If," she broke in, indignantly, "like the rest, I stoop to wheedle and flatter. And oh! I'd thought *you* different. In spite of your cynicism there has always been this other side to you which I'd thought true—seeing through the shams, even your own. But you're like all the rest. You care for a woman only when she's happy, for what she has to give *you*. When *she* wants anything that's another matter."

"Am I really such an unresponsive brute?"

"You used not to be; but of late—you've changed. And I don't know why." She turned her face to the fire to conceal a quivering lip.

The touch of femininity, of weakness and surrender, made her beauty doubly appealing. Drawing a chair close to hers he took her hand, holding it fast as she tried to draw it away.

"Let me have it; it makes me feel closer to

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you. Do you remember, about a year ago—I remember the night well—you wore a black velvet frock, with only a jewel in your hair——?”

“It’s always my looks,” she said, bitterly. “I sometimes wish I were hideous.”

This note he had never heard her sound before. It stimulated the satiated palate of this epicure in women and lent ardor to the reminiscence.

“Do you remember my telling you, that same night, of an inability to remain constant to any one woman?” She did not answer, and he continued: “But believe me, dear friend, it brings its own punishment. Give me your pity, Mabel; I need it more than you know.” He bowed his head over her hand, touching it lightly with his lips, with the grace of an old-world chivalry that had been the undoing of more than one woman’s peace.

At this moment an obsequious cough from the doorway hurled them against unyielding realities with a suddenness jarring alike to nerves and sentiments.

“What is it, Mason?”

“Mrs. Fanshawe wishes to see you, madam.”

“Didn’t I tell you that I was at home to no one?”

“Yes, madam: I told her so, and she told me to come up and ask if you would see her.”

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"Better do it," advised Hawkes, unable to restrain a smile. "She knows that you are at home; I told her last evening that I was to see you this afternoon."

"You may tell her to come up, Mason."

As the man withdrew, cat-like as he had come, Hawkes exclaimed:

"Can that flawless human automaton be compatriot of mine? And yet what other than uncrossed English stock could produce a species sufficiently depleted of humor and imagination to develop that immobility, unsurpassed by Egypt's Sphinx or your own cigar-store Indian. It is positively Olympian!—the ideal I have ever striven for and my accursed French blood has ever kept me from attaining. He puts us both to shame."

"Not you, or you couldn't talk like this," she reproached, still tremulously.

"And do you not know that it is this French blood of mine that also——" He had moved towards the door and stopped at hearing the swish of an approaching silk skirt.

"And what does this French blood of yours do?" asked Mrs. Fanshawe, her florid face showing a good-natured smile as she entered the room.

"Makes me most flippant when I'm striving hardest to attain the magnificent calm of Mason," he answered, imperturbably.

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With an emphatic " Fudge! " she passed him to greet Mabel.

" And how are you this awful day, my dear? Every woman I've seen since mornin' has either a screamin' attack of neuralgia or what Doctor Marlitt calls egoitis. If I didn't get out on a day like this, I'd get on my own nerves, too; instead of which, I get madly virtuous and do up all the things I let slide the rest of the time."

" In other words," elucidated Hawkes, " ennui is essential to awaken you to a sense of your moral responsibilities. Fie, Salomy Jane! I had thought better of you."

" Well, at any rate, I've *got* that sense at times," with which shot she turned to Mabel. " And I think I'm here in a good cause—it's for our Diet Kitchen. We're out of funds, and goin' to try and raise some. Concert—Plaza—next month sometime. I came to see if you can get your cousin to play for us. Of course, we'll pay her."

" My cousin would not do it for money."

Knowing that Mabel had married for it, Mrs. Fanshawe smiled and said: " Now don't get miffed, my dear; and if she'll do it for love so much the better.—We'll want you for a patroness, of course."

" Very well."

Mabel's utter lack of interest would have dis-

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couraged a more sensitive or less strenuous organizer, but not Mrs. Fanshawe.

"I wish, Mabel, you'd take more interest in these things. You're so well known that you'd only have to get more into the game to get all the social climbers scramblin' after you."

"See what it is to be a reigning beauty of Knickerbocker descent and queen of the yellow journals," girmed Hawkes.

"Jolly all you like, Brooke," Mrs. Fanshawe rejoined; "but the power of social position plus dollars is a great one—I mean for good. You know that all the hangers-on with the necessary cash are willin' to buy their way into our set. I know, for I was one of 'em myself once," laughing her fat laugh. "My! the sums I used to give to things I didn't know a thing about. But now I'm safely landed, you bet I *do* know what I give to. And the more I do it, the more I really want to. You see, I knew what it was to be rat poor once; and so, when I see these wretched, half-starved women comin' in for milk for their little brats, I just fork out—which may do more harm than good, for it just makes 'em keep on havin' babies when they've no business to and might stop if they couldn't feed 'em. The Socialists turn your ideas upside down so these days that they almost make you feel it's a crime to be charitable."

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"At any rate, Jane," consoled Mr. Hawkes, "it does *you* good even if it doesn't them. Our good Lord Bishop used to say that women used the poor as their Jacob's ladder with which to climb into heaven. If you save your own soul, what matter if you exploit theirs?"

"How absurd you are, Brooke! How could one possibly exploit another's soul?"

"It is a bit filmy and vague for so solid a purpose, I admit—yet, there's Mrs. Piper."

Mrs. Fanshawe rose: "I can't waste any more time listenin' to your hot air. I must finish up my list of patronesses this afternoon. It's just the day for findin' people in, and so bored they're glad to see you and willin' to hand out."

"*What* a trust magnate is lost to finance in you, Salomy!"

"I detest you, Brooke, when you are in these moods. How can you stand him, Mabel, a day like this? But, about your cousin? Suppose you ask us for lunch, and I bet you I can win her with the babies. She's got a sharp tongue, but she has a heart, too, or her face belies her. If you're comin' down town, Brooke, I'll give you a lift, and do an act of charity at the same time by riddin' Mabel of you."

Which invitation a suppliant glance from Mabel had nearly caused him to refuse, when

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Alfred's voice from the hall brought the word of dismissal from her.

"If you're going to the Raquette Club, take Alfred with you."

"Thanks," answered Alfred for himself, an immediate resolution forming in his brain to do something else. "I'm just off to the Riding Club to exercise that new mare of mine. Stop in if you have the time, Mrs. Fanshawe, and have a look at her. She's the slickest thing sold this winter."

Under cover of his voice Mabel was saying to Hawkes:

"You know that Mahler leads to-night? You'll come, and sit with us?—I've asked no one."

"Gladly," he assented with a gentle pressure of her hand. "Mahler's *Tristan*——" and he stopped, sending Mabel's desire leaping to the emphasis that he had paused to avoid. An impatient summons from Mrs. Fanshawe gave him no time to deflect this current; and he left, pondering uneasily upon Nemesis.

XV.

ONE blustery afternoon late in February, as Claire was leaving the hospital, she encountered Mrs. Fanshawe in the elevator. With her was a neat, but poorly dressed woman, and an orderly carrying a baby that was gurgling with joy over Mrs. Fanshawe's hand, the diamonds of whose rings it was doing its utmost to swallow. Seeing Claire's perfunctorily extended hand, she exclaimed:

"Oh, how do you do, Miss Raymond? I can't shake hands—as you see my hand's otherwise engaged; and as we've been a very sick baby, we have to be humored."

The child's face was white and pinched, and as Mrs. Fanshawe looked pityingly down upon it, she presented such a contrast to the half-intoxicated woman whom Claire had last seen at Mabel's dinner that she had a bewildered sense of an altogether different personality, and, when questioned as to what brought her there, responded cordially:

"Not half so useful a mission as yours seems to be. I've only been playing up in the solarium, which I do every Thursday."

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"Well, I call that pretty nice of you! And I'm sure it's a rare treat for the patients. Thursday's my day, too. Next week I'll be up to hear you."

"And what brings you regularly?" Claire asked, now with a genuine interest.

"The kiddies. It seems more of a grind, somehow, for them to be sick—so early in the game, and a few toys or goodies cheer 'em up no end. They've come to look for me, so I try to save Thursdays for 'em."

When they reached the street Mrs. Fanshawe asked Claire to wait a moment, and leading the way to a handsome limousine car standing before the door, put her charges into it. After an ineffectual effort to quiet the child, who began a vehement protest each time she tried to withdraw her hand, she turned to Claire in mock despair.

"I'm afraid I'll have to take this naughty mite home to its mother. Could you possibly spare the time to come with me? I've somethin' I want very much to talk to you about. Please do," laying a persuasive hand upon Claire's arm, who the next moment found herself speeding smoothly over the asphalt without having uttered a word of consent; Mrs. Fanshawe smiling approval and asking after her health, reminding her that they had not met since her illness.

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"Your cousin has told me how very sick you've been, and how the care of that splendid Doctor Rathbone saved your life. If all we hear about him is true, he certainly deserves his wonderful luck. It's just like a book, isn't it?"

"I don't know what you mean," Claire answered, stiffly.

Mrs. Fanshawe looked perturbed. "You're such friends—I thought of course—I only heard of it myself this mornin', and can't remember half of it——"

"But what is it?" Claire interrupted, impatiently.

"It's simply that Mrs. Lane—old G. Lane's widow—has handed over millions to him to put up a great hospital—somewhere up in the Bronx, I think it is—and he's to have entire charge of it. It's to cover acres—how many I can't remember. There are to be lovely gardens, and I don't know how many separate pavilions for different diseases—and many other buildin's. Besides the lecture halls and school for nurses, they're to have a school of—prevention—preventive medicine, I think the doctor calls it; and he said that the—what's the name for the study of life? I never can remember that word."

"Biology," supplied Claire.

"Oh, yes, he said that the facilities for biological research and experimental surgery were

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to be ahead of any of the other hospitals either here or abroad. But the finest thing of all about it is that it's to be free to everybody, just as a public library is. In fact, everything about it is to be free."

Claire's interest, tinged with chagrin that she should not have heard of this from Rathbone himself, was suddenly held in abeyance by the strange appearance of the woman opposite her, whose large, black eyes were fixed upon Mrs. Fanshawe with a breathless intentness that evinced much more than an impersonal interest. Wondering uneasily if she knew Rathbone, Claire continued to watch her. In both face and figure she discerned traces of great beauty, as well as evidences of illness and poverty that would have aroused her sympathy had the expression been less hard and sullen.

Before Mrs. Fanshawe had quite finished her stumbling narrative the car stopped before a squalid tenement, and the woman got out to fetch the baby's mother. In a few moments she returned with a big, honest-faced Irish woman; in whom, as she stretched out her arms for her child, Claire noticed a grotesque likeness to the fashionably attired Mrs. Fanshawe. The baby may also have felt it, for it consented to the change of arms without further protest, and remained perfectly still while Mrs. O'Brien poured forth a richly brogued gratitude that



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Mrs. Fanshawe was compelled to stem with directions to the footman. The car moved off to Mrs. O'Brien's hearty "God bless ye, mum!"

Before Mrs. Fanshawe would say good-by she had won a promise from Claire to, at least, think over her proposition, and let her know in a few days if she would consent to play for her "sick babies."

XVI

THE two women left on Second Avenue, after the exchange of a few questions and answers, entered the dirty, badly lighted corridor of their house, and Mrs. O'Brien, crooning over her restored child, led the way up the steep stairs. The younger woman, whose name was Luigia Mosca, followed wearily, one hand grasping the rickety rail for support, the other held over her mouth and nose. To her keener sensibilities, coming directly from the immaculate hospital and the luxurious, flower-scented interior of Mrs. Fanshawe's car, the fetid tenement atmosphere was nauseous. The narrow, dangerously dark halls, through which she had to feel her way to escape contact with the noisome sink jutting out from the wall; its one tap the sole water supply; its small basin the only drainage receptacle of each floor for the slops of its eighteen or twenty occupants—all filled her with loathing. As they reached the third landing a door suddenly flew open, and a child fell almost under their feet from the impetus of a blow upon the back of its head struck by a creature who looked more a demon than a woman. Her face was distorted with rage beneath a mass of

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touzled, gray hair that fell over shoulders guiltless of any covering, above a pair of corsets, gray with dirt, and a short, ragged petticoat that displayed her bare feet and ankles. Luigia Mosca turned her eyes away from the repulsive spectacle and passed on up the stairs. But Mrs. O'Brien, shifting her baby to one broad hip, leaned over the prostrate child, and gave vent to her indignation.

"Ye indacent Dago divil ye, to be skelpin' a child like that!" Her only answer being the door slammed in her face; while the child on the floor, not understanding the words and grasping only the unmistakable resentment in the tones of the woman leaning over him, having wriggled out of her reach, picked himself up and ran down the stairs, sobbing pitifully. Terrified by the noise, the baby added its voice to the din; and Luigia Mosca removed her hands to her ears as she awaited Mrs. O'Brien on the floor above.

"Come in and have a bit o' tay," coaxed Mrs. O'Brien, as she turned the handle of her door.

"Thank you, but I've got to get back to my wash—haven't a clean rag to put on."

"And sure it was good of ye to lave it. Is it thankful to Miss Mosca ye are fer goin' all the way to the hospital and bringin' ye home in sich iligance?" And she held the baby out

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at arm's length. "Dade and she is, the darlint. See her smilin' at ye. It's a good turn we'll be doin' her fer it one o' thim days, won't we?"

"Oh, Mrs. O'Brien! As if you hadn't been doin' me good turns ever since I came here: it's me that's always owin' 'em to you."

"G'long wid ye! I mane come in whinever ye like, fer a bit o' dinner or supper; fer it's not hungry ye'll be always atin' alone." And it's too often hungry she is, mentally added the big-hearted woman, as the other entered the adjoining door and, locking it behind her, passed through a small, dark bedroom to the kitchen beyond. The walls and woodwork were stained and cracked, but the meagre contents of the room—the bare necessities of living—presented an aspect of order and cleanliness. Upon an ironing table lay the pile of half-dried clothes which she had hastily left to go to the hospital. Crossing over to the window she threw it wide open, drew up a chair, and propping her elbows upon the sill, gazed drearily down upon the elevated tracks below. But she neither saw their long perspective nor heard the trains rumbling by. Thick and fast memories were crowding into her brain, aroused by again hearing the name of John Rathbone, of whose surgical skill she had once had such intimate knowledge. And with them was dawning a

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hope that during the eight years since she had seen him he might have come to know how wrongly he had judged her. If she were to take back the letter and tell him why she had taken it, he might believe her now, and help her in her terrible necessity as he had helped so many others. She rose, closed the window, and threw off her hat and jacket. As she did so her eyes fell upon the pile of clothes. With an impatient grab at the coal scuttle, she emptied half of its contents into the stove, then threw a couple of irons down upon it with such force that one of them bounded off onto the floor. Stooping to pick it up, she muttered: "How I hate it! hate it! hate it!" A few moments she stood gazing abstractedly at the stove, then went swiftly into the other room, returning with a packet of letters in her hand. Sitting down by the table, she drew one out and laid it open before her.

It was dated:

NEW YORK,

August 1st, 1901.

DEAR JIM:

Yours of July 23rd from St. Moritz just received. First, I want to say that on no account must you think of coming home. As for relieving me of work—don't you know, old man, that is the thing of all others I most need? If it were not for that I'd—but I know you'll understand. In fact it's for this that I want to thank you—for understanding as only you—and perhaps Margaret could; for only you two really knew and loved my baby. I can hardly speak of her

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yet—or think of her even. So you see, that work is my salvation—and knowing that I've got what I deserve. As yet, I'm too little known for the world to have bothered its head about our relationship, but eventually it must have become known; and then, no matter what position I might have attained, the fact that my child's mother had not been my wife would probably have spoiled her life. That would have been greater punishment even than this, for I could not have shielded her. To say that I would give my life to atone is banal when they are both dead—God, if I but had the chance! If you believe in one, Jim, thank him every hour of your life that you have not got to go through the rest of it with such a debt unpaid. I keep telling myself that there are still the living women through whom I may, in part, atone, by helping them to bear the burden of their sex and men's crimes against it; than which I am coming to believe there's none more dastardly. It's one of the most pitiful injustices of all time, as well as the most damning evidence of man's brutality and cowardice, that he has not risen long ere this and decreed that, at least, she shall not have to endure the social stigma while he escapes it.

Here the letter stopped. She read the last page over and over until she could not see the lines for her tears. The past eight years of her life seemed suddenly to fade away, and this man to stand out the one good, vital thing behind them. How generously he had helped her to redeem herself until she had won his confidence; the confidence which she then had deserved, but now! . . . Again those eight years loomed hideously close, not as an ugly dream, but a brutal, irrevocable, suffocating reality. "And now I'm the mud in the gutter under his feet," she sobbed aloud.



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The cheap alarm-clock ticked the seconds away; the stove grew red hot, then black again; the daylight faded to darkness: but the woman sat on beside the table, her face buried in her hands.

XVII

JOHN RATHBONE sat in his library, his long legs stretched out towards the blazing logs crackling cheerily upon the heavy brass and-irons. As if in derision of the dim rays shed from the green-shaded lamp on the table in the center of the room—a piece of old carved oak—the fire sent gleams of light dancing over the floor and walls; bringing out the warm tints of the rug, the chair cushions, and the binding of the books that filled the shelves—also of carved black oak—lining the walls from floor to frieze. It was essentially a man's room, charming in its simplicity, comfort, and lack of superfluities; the sort of room a woman always envies and is never able to create.

In spite of the fire's heat, John shivered and quickly drew his hand away from the sudden contact of Mike's cold nose.

"A beastly habit that of yours, Mike. Couldn't you announce yourself with some warmer and less moist part of your anatomy upon such a night as this?"

By no means in the way of apology two white fore-paws went up on his knee, and he sought a safe place for his hand upon that spot de-

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lectable which lies behind the ear of every dog of any, or no breed. Running his hand over the muscular white back, he continued, for the benefit of Martha, who had followed the dog into the room:

“ Pretty good muscles those, Mike; but I suppose you’re far too fragile to have had a chance to exercise them to-day.”

“ It’s a bitter night, Doctor,” and Martha smiled indulgently upon them both; “ much too bad for even dogs to be out in.”

“ Right you are, Martha. And it’s awful to think that there are human beings who have to spend it on the street. Just walking a block has given me the shivers. I wish you’d bring me the whiskey.”

When Martha returned, Mike lay before the fire with the offending member almost between the andirons, while John sat at the table, examining the last installment of drawings submitted by his architect for the new hospital buildings. Not to disarrange them, or disturb him, Martha left her tray upon a little Turkish smoking table within his reach; half apologetic, half scolding over the fact that the Rye was all gone and she had only Scotch to offer him. The tray held two decanters and a tumbler, the remnants of a set of Venetian glass, the gift of a grateful patient. The stopper of one having been broken, it was wont to serve as a carafe. Pre-

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occupied with the drawings, John picked up the stoppered decanter, poured a small quantity of its contents into the glass, then more than half filled it from the other. Disliking Scotch whiskey he took his dose at a gulp; a draught that half strangled him. Breath regained, he held the carafe to his nose to find that the stopper had somehow found its way into the wrong neck and he had drunk nearly half a tumblerful of whiskey. A vigorous "Damn!" sent Mike's ears up in uneasy wonderment; but as no chastisement followed to tell him that he had been the offender, he dozed off again, only to be reawakened to an awful moment of uncertainty by a poke from a big boot, and being asked how he supposed any of the poor devils who had to go cold and hungry escaped being drunkards. The doubt dispelled by a hand upon his head offering a caress, he wagged a faithful tail in response to the next question as to why that procrastinating master of his did not come home? To wait for him, John resumed his seat by the fire, giving himself up to drowsiness and pipe dreams.

"Dear little thing!" he suddenly exclaimed; and up went Mike's ears again. John laughed. "Talking to myself, was I, Mike? It's that damned whiskey—and a slender bit of a girl who also goes to my head now and then. She'd better not look at me often and say 'dear Doc-

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tor John ' the way she did to-night. It isn't good for a lone bachelor—no, nor safe for her. Though I don't know but that it was even more dangerous when she told me about making her début—when she threw up that graceful little head of hers, saying, ' I'm going to do it ! ' looking for all the world like a spirited pony taking a fence. But," his voice growing almost inaudible, " it was most dangerous of all when she said the thought of it so terrified her that she wanted to run away to the ends of the earth. Then her big, beautiful eyes looked like a deer's—and I almost——" But Mike never heard what he almost did, for Martha's voice broke in upon the narrative.

" There's a woman down in the hall, sir, who asks to see you, and won't give her name. She isn't a nice-looking person at all—and coming at this time of night ! "

Arousing himself with an effort, John replied : " All times are pretty much the same to people in trouble, Martha. Tell her to come up. It would be too cold in my office ; I opened the windows there when I came in."

In the haggard, shabbily dressed woman who walked into the room a moment later, he saw only an ill, half-frozen creature shaking so that she could hardly speak.

" You have a chill," he said, kindly. " Sit here by the fire."

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Taking the chair to which he pointed, she unhesitatingly drained the glass he handed her and, with an effort, controlled her voice sufficiently to say:

“Don’t you remember—don’t you know me?”

He looked at her more intently, inwardly cursing the whiskey as he passed his hand across his flushed forehead.

“You do suggest someone—but I can’t think whom.”

“I’m Luigia—— And I’ve come back to——” She stopped nervously at the very perceptible hardening of his face, then stumbled on: “You still think I’m a thief because——”

“Because,” he interrupted, “I found you at my desk before an open drawer that I had left locked, and from which I afterwards found money and a letter missing.”

“I never took any money,” she retorted, passionately: “it was only the letter I took, and——”

“The money was gone,” he again interrupted.

“I tell you I didn’t take it,” she reiterated, sullenly. “I only took the letter—and I never meant to pinch that. I only wanted to see if it told anything about—that woman that——” The veins stood out on his forehead, and she hastened to add: “But I’ve brought it back, to

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see if I can't make you—I knew I'd get nothin' by takin' it back then——”

“ So that's your game! After betraying my trust in you, and robbing me, you now come to blackmail.”

She rose, her face flaming. “ You lie! ”

The dog growled, and he put his foot on him to force him down, at the same time struggling to control his own anger. “ Then what *have* you come for? ”

“ To show you you'd no right to take me for a thief; to tell you I'd 'ave died sooner than rob you! ” She had taken a step towards him and stopped at the unmistakable repulsion with which he moved back from her. With a laugh which was more of a snarl, she took another step towards him. “ So you're afraid I might touch you? And I'm not fit to! ” She stopped within a few inches of his now rigidly immovable form. “ I'm none too good, I know, or been a respectable member of society like you; but whatever I've done, I've brought no nameless brats into the world. It's good for her yours——”

“ Stop! ” he cried, walking to the door, which he held open. “ And now go, before I forget that I'm a man and you a woman.”

XVIII

AFTER giving her consent to Mrs. Fanshawe, Claire spent the following week in a fever of work. Called upon for advice as to what she should play, Hawkes advised Chopin, the *Berceuse* and *Storm Étude*, as offering a sufficiently contrasted and not too difficult material with which to display her powers, as well as the essential quality of appeal to what he supposed would be a none-too-knowing audience.

The *Étude* had for so long been an outlet to her stormy moods that she felt she could play it in her sleep. Concentrating upon the *Berceuse*, she moved, ate, and slept to its swaying rhythm, until a few days before that set for the concert, when, in reply to her anxious inquiry as to how it went, Hawkes replied:

“Alas, Lenore! I have never heard you play so badly.” He had come to call her Lenore, declaring that in her there lived a primal, untamed woman. “You have exhausted it—or yourself in it, and become a human metronome. Put it away and don’t touch it again until the concert.”

“But suppose I should forget any of it?” the terror of the thought mirrored in her face.

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"If you do, it will be because you succumb to hysteria; and you can do that just as readily if you never stop practicing up to the moment of your appearance."

"I suppose that's so," she acquiesced, despairingly; "and of all things, it must not be mechanical; it must speak—it must be music, else I shall be a failure; and then what should I have to live for?"

He did not answer because of a too poignant comprehension. Thus had he failed, and if he had a reason for living he could not have formulated it. But knowing that her fires sprang from greater depths than his own, he feared only the possible physical breakdown. His complete understanding and unceasing efforts to ease the tension of these last days, won a gratitude and dependence from her that, for the nonce, supplied him with a *raison d'être* both sweet and satisfying. To him she could tell her fears; with Rathbone she felt ashamed of them.

At last the crucial morning dawned, and she awoke to the impotent revolt of the ego against life's indifference to its cataclysms. She had dreamed of ambrosia, and it brought her a sponge, tooth brush, and breakfast tray. She fled to the Park, but it was little better there. The children were playing, their French and German governesses gossiping in groups ac-

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cording to their nationality, exactly as they did upon every other sunny morning, wholly oblivious of her. And even the squirrels, to whom she had given so much, were not one whit less absorbed in their greediness for peanuts. A numbing sense of her own littleness and the futility of human endeavor overwhelmed her; and she fled home again in search of Marian, who had promised to come early and stay for lunch. But to no purpose had poor, faithful Marian gone against professional etiquette by asking for her time off in the morning, thereby having to forego the concert; for her loving, anxious eyes becoming irksome in their turn, she brought Claire relief only by her departure.

The concert was to begin at three, but as she was not to "come on" until the last preceding the intermission, she had asked Mabel, who had offered to fetch her, to send the brougham back for her half an hour later. As she rode through the familiar streets, they took on an aspect of strangeness, heightened by the premature arrival of a little song sparrow that, perched upon the leafless branch of one of the trees in the middle of the Plaza, was trilling its ecstatic prophecy of spring: those notes of an almost painfully penetrating sweetness, with a lilting sob at the close, which always spoke to her of the promises of joy Life makes to youth, and so seldom fulfills.

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The carriage drew up before the hotel; she alighted and entered the corridor, struggling with an almost overmastering impulse to run away, down another corridor, back into the street—anywhere but in the direction of the elevator towards which her feet were carrying her.

“Concert hall, madam?” asked a man servant, seeing her hesitation. “This way, please,” and she went forward as if at the command of an executioner. To be hanged one had only to be passive and not cry out, the initiative was another’s; but this terrifying thing she had to do herself, with no one to help her.

As she approached the dressing-room a babel of voices fell upon her ears. At a first glance pandemonium seemed to reign within it. A tall man with a Van Dyke beard and large bunch of violets in his buttonhole was walking back and forth, singing scales. At no great distance from him a woman was repeating some difficult bars of an aria, each seemingly unconscious of the other’s presence or the racking discord that they were creating. Equally undisturbed by it appeared a noisy group of men and women, the center of which was a well-known comedian, at whose sallies they were laughing uproariously. The stage door had just opened to admit an actress, whom Mrs. Fanshawe was congratulating. Seeing Claire, she welcomed her warmly,

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and, introducing the last performer, hurried away.

The actress, a maiden of forty-five summers or more, attired in a pink frock reaching to her ankles, her hair tied at the back of her neck with a large pink bow, a fluffy garden hat topping the whole, smiled kindly upon Claire, asking her if she, too, were one of the performers. Receiving an affirmative reply, as well as the information that it was her first appearance, she remonstrated with motherly solicitude:

“ But, my dear, it will never do for you to go on looking like this. One’s looks count for so much before one is known; and you’re as white as a sheet. You must let me touch you up a little.” And taking Claire by the hand she led her towards a dressing table, where, between dabs of rouge and powder, she babbled consolation. “ I used to be that way, too, until I got into Science, and then I saw how foolish it was, because, you see, it was really only fear that I feared: and fear being only error, does not exist, as error is only an expression of mortal mind. When you come to know that all is Divine Mind—just see what a different person a little color is making of you. What was I saying?—oh, yes, when you know that Divine Mind cannot err, and that we are all an expression of Divine Mind, you have only to put yourself in harmony with Divine Love to have all

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you are, and do, become good and beautiful. Being an expression of God, there is nothing we cannot do when we know that mortal body does not exist. Just a wee bit more powder here, and I've changed you from a ghost to a pretty girl."

At this point a boy in buttons hurried into the room, calling: "Signor Moretti, a telegram for Signor Moretti," putting a stop to the big basso's scales; while, at the same moment, the stage door opened to admit a *Liedersinger*, retiring amidst the usual applause.

Then Claire heard her name called, she did not know by whom; but, of course, it made no difference—none of it was real—it was all a nightmare, and she was dreaming of a lunatic asylum. She was mad—they were all mad; each thinking him or herself some famous person about to create a sensation. "Miss Raymond, Miss Raymond, don't you hear the manager? It's your turn to go on," and she felt a hand upon her shoulder giving her a compelling push towards the stage door, the impetus of which sent her through it, to the parting admonition: "Remember that your music is an expression of God, and you cannot fail." As if still impelled by an extraneous force, she walked on into a blur of lights and faces, her knees shaking so that she thought she must fall. Not knowing how she reached it, she found herself

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in the chair before the keyboard; an unintelligible black and white thing towards which her hands automatically moved. Probably all these people were expecting her to do something with it—but what? and she looked beseechingly down into the sea of faces. They could only want to torture her; for they must know that she was mad, and couldn't really do it—this stupendous, impossible feat that no one *could* accomplish all alone.

Mabel moved uneasily in her chair. How could Claire act like this! Was she going to be such a weak idiot as to succumb to stage-fright?

A cold sweat broke out upon Hawkes' forehead, believing that what he had feared had occurred: the strain been too great for her strength.

And then the miracle happened. From out the blur one face appeared—John Rathbone's, set squarely towards hers in a gaze of powerful concentration. When her eyes rested upon his in recognition, he smiled. Instantly the turmoil of brain and nerves ceased; a strength as of new blood infused into depleted arteries flowed into her, and her brain cleared as if by magic.

Out of doors the air was unseasonably balmy. It was one of those rare, windless days that February sometimes filches from April; when the sun's warmth stirs the blood and brings cravings for broad meadows, far-off blue hills,

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and clean winds that carry the smell of damp soil; or else to wander out over the world, there to find richer, fuller life: the human response, mayhap, to earth's pregnancy. Many of those in the audience having felt it, and heard the little song-sparrow up among the bare branches, were in particularly receptive mood, as, after a few chords and arpeggios, with eyes half closed, her head slightly swaying to its rhythm, Claire began the *Berceuse*. Softly, yet with bell-like clearness, the slowly swinging theme sang in their ears; the unrest of spring gave way to the lassitude of summer; the nostalgia for wandering to a delicious languor. Lazily, drowsily, she rocked it back and forth—a cradle of dreams—in warm flower-scented air, to the droning of bees, and the hum of the locusts rising to its swelling climax, then fading away, to rise and fall again and again, till the eyes closed and the senses swooned. For an instant after the last note had died softly away there was a complete hush, lest there might come an echo that would be lost. Then, as if from one throat, came a great sigh. The audience had moved, beginning to clap with an effort. This seeming perfunctoriness Claire did not misunderstand. It was proof of the strength of her narcotic. But now she must waken them. With a tempo and gusty passion in startling contrast to the *Berceuse*, she dashed into the *Étude*. A veritable thun-

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derclap from a clear sky it seemed. Gone was the stillness, the warmth of the flower-scented air and lazy droning of the bees, giving place to black, swirling clouds, bending trees and water lashed by a fury of wind—the onrush of a sublime, invincible force, sweeping all before it. And even so she swept through the souls of her listeners. She read it in each ardent face when the powerful climax brought its answering storm of applause; saw that, as easily as the tempest sways a forest, she could sway a multitude.

Again she caught John's smile, and flashed a radiant one to him in return; understanding him as never before: this man who would not brook failure; to whom the expression of one's genius was more to be desired than happiness. With shining eyes and a charming natural grace she bowed her acknowledgments, then reached for the armful of flowers an usher was handing up to her. Taking all she could hold, she buried her face in them. With hair slightly loosened and cheeks flushed beneath the rouge, she looked very slight and young; and the girlish impulsiveness of her act, pleasing them afresh, received a renewed demonstration.

How good they were to her, all these strange people! She was deeply grateful, and must tell them so in the only way that she could. Laying the flowers beside the rack she resumed her seat.

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In view of the exigency of their mutual desire, hers to play for them again and theirs to hear her, the customary disappearance seemed an inane superfluity. The realization that she had waived it, brought the enthusiasm to a still higher pitch, and the clamor continued until she had played a dozen or more bars of the *A flat Ballade*, when a few vigorous hisses quelled it. Then once more she held them, thrilled and enthralled, while, like a pæan, the beautiful melody rang out upon a tense silence, each superb crescendo rising to a fuller and more ecstatic expression of joy, until, bursting the confines of one human heart, it seemed to voice the joy of the world.

"Intoxicating! Masterly!" said a famous dramatist to the critic beside him. "She is herself a vibrant human string, throbbing with passion and poetry."

"Marvelous!" shouted the critic, to be heard above the uproar. "In this short time she has run the gamut of the emotions."

The entire audience had risen. Men were pounding the floor with their canes, in lieu of them others used chairs. Women split their gloves; some threw their violets; others were weeping; and every face bore a like expression: that something akin to love, yet more to worship, which now and then the great artist wins from the public.

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But she to whom all this homage was being rendered had not risen. She sat with fixed gaze, her hands still grasping the keys as if she had poured into them all her strength and were clinging to them for support. But she was conscious neither of them nor of herself. All the intoxication of power and success was swept away in a great humility. She sat at the feet of archangels, listening to the music of their harps, yet knowing it for John's music of life—life at its moments of supreme fulfilment.

Watching her anxiously, John saw her sway, and sprang towards the stage. But before he could reach her, she had lurched forward, her head striking the rack. Ere the bewildered audience gathered its wits sufficiently to grasp the fact that she had fainted, he disappeared through the stage door with her limp form in his arms.

XIX

JOHN had taken her home in his car, alternately petting and scolding, but refusing all praise, declaring that as her head was in a good way of being completely turned, he refused to be a party to the turning thereof. Two weeks had since passed with nothing from him but an inquiry over the telephone as to how she was. Piqued at his seeming indifference, she had refused all discussion of herself by answering that she felt perfectly well. Fearful of again misjudging him, she offered no reproaches for what appeared a glaring omission of friendship contrasted with the deluge of adulation pouring in upon her from every side. Could he really have so poor an opinion of her as to think that she would drown in it? And if not, why had he nothing to say now that she had done what he had never ceased urging, and done it well? If he really understood her—but was there ever a man who did understand a woman? One she was willing to acknowledge partially clear-sighted:—he who said that woman was not the female of man. Of course, it was man who did not complement woman. She even went so far as to question the complemental idea *in toto*;

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to ask if it were not, in fact, another of the tyrant snares for keeping her in subjection—the sop to that evolving Cerberus, her intellect. Then justice demanded that she scorn the woman who, having evolved it, remained unsatisfied. Looking out upon the snowflakes swirling against her window, beautifying all they touched, she recalled her supreme moment of exaltation, and wept that it had been so fleeting. And this was the artist's reward! For all the labor and all the pain, only these rare transcendent moments that left all others poisoned by desire. Yet Faust had sought his whole life through for one such moment. The thought would have brought consolation had not angels wafted him to heaven ere Mephistopheles could drag him down to the nethermost depths of that hell of reaction, compared with which the tortures of Tantalus were as nothing. The postman's whistle came as a welcome interruption to these despondent reflections, which were speedily dispelled by the contents of the letter that she took from her box.

The leader of a famous Continental string quartette, giving its first concert in America the following week, was offering her a considerable financial inducement to substitute for a virtuoso of world-wide reputation who was to have assisted them in the *Schumann Quintette*, but whose sudden illness had forced him to cancel

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his engagement. Having had the rare privilege of hearing her inspired rendering of the part five years before, at the house of the *Meister* in Vienna, he knew that a week's rehearsing with them would be more than sufficient for her great powers; *et cetera, et cetera*.

She recalled the pianist with whom she had heard them play it and her own rage at his woodenness, which all the verve of these fiery Bohemians had not been able to ignite.

A neat pile of music was a litter on the floor ere she remembered having lent the Quintette to Hawkes. She started to the telephone; but little black and white ivory devils lay tempting between. A race with them! and she was off galloping with the *Earl King's* daughter, hurling defiance at all devils in pursuit and bidding Doctor Faustus go to heaven with his angels; *such* a stupid beatification with the goal—another moment, in view!

She stopped suddenly and turned to find Marian standing in the doorway leading to her bedroom.

"Ugh!" said Marian. "The way you play that thing always makes my spine creep. I am always so afraid she's going to be caught."

"I suppose I shall be;" and Claire jumped up to give Marian one of her impulsive hugs; "but not till afterwards."

"After what?"

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"After I've been to heaven with the most perfect musical organization in the world."

"Will you please come down to earth and talk English."

"No, but I'll translate some German for you;" and Claire read the letter to her. "Now what have you to say to that?"

"Why, I think it perfectly splendid, of course—if you're equal to it. You know Doctor Rathbone said that you ought to be stronger before attempting another concert."

"Bother Doctor Rathbone!"

"It would be more to the point to offer him a little consolation. He's lost his hospital."

"Lost it how?—why?"

"It seems that Mrs. Lane has been told of the European episode by an office nurse that he once had, whether for blackmail or out of revenge I don't know; but the pious old idiot now thinks him unfit to dispose of the tainted millions of her ex-convict husband. If it wasn't a tragedy it would be a joke."

"Oh!" groaned Claire. "What a beast I am to have been blaming him for not coming to see me."

"It certainly is rather beastly of you to question his friendship, considering what you owe him. I wonder, Claire, if you'll ever learn moderation."

"I'll call him up this minute!"

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"There you go again! Please wait until you've thought what you're going to say."

"I'm going to beg his pardon for doubting him again."

"Why let him know that you did? It seems to me that it would be kinder not to. I should think that he'd be needing all the kindness one could give him just now."

"You're always right, Marian, and I hopelessly wrong. I think I must be possessed of devils."

"You'd think them very tame ones if you could have heard Mabel talking to Alfred last night. Her nerves are in the most awful state. Poor Alfred! He hadn't done a thing; it was all because Hawkes didn't come to dinner—called off at the last moment."

"I shouldn't have let him if I'd known."

"So you were responsible for it, Missie?"

"No more than you, for preferring to go to Mabel than to the opera with me. I couldn't go alone, so I asked him in your place."

"And like a pet poodle he always comes when whistled for. Now that he's at your feet, Claire, what are you going to do with him?"

"I deny that he is. If he were, ridicule of the position would soon put him upon his own. One doesn't take the attention of a Don Juan seriously. And to do him justice, he quite frankly acknowledges an incurable fickleness."

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It's only my music and the fact that I have no designs upon his liberty that keep him from bolting. That's where Mabel fails to understand him."

"How can she understand him, being in love with him?" protested Marian. "If she could only have a child!"

"Poor kiddie! I can't bear to contemplate its existence."

"The fact that she wants children shows that she has more heart than you think, and children are what she needs to develop it."

"Possibly, by virtue of the fact that if she is to assume any responsibilities they'll have to be thrust upon her. But about the B. Quartette, Marian?"

"I should say," her cousin answered with a smile, "that that was a real reason for telephoning Doctor Rathbone."

"Piggie! But I will—later."

XX

"WELL?" said Rathbone, as he stood looking down at Claire that same evening. Struck dumb at the sight of the havoc wrought in his face since she had last seen him, she could only offer her hand in greeting. "Won't you say that you're glad to see me?"

"Of course I'm glad. But you look so—are you ill?"

He dropped her hand. "I've been a bit out of sorts and need sleep."

"Marian has told me—about the hospital. Won't you tell me how it happened?"

"I've come to tell you more than that; but first, I want to know about this musical proposition."

It now seemed of such slight importance that she stated it badly and, having gained his approval, dismissed it. Hypersensitive to pain, her eyes reflected all the evidences of it in his haggard face and disconcerted him.

"Would you mind if I switched off the lights? I can talk better if——"

"I can listen better, too," and she flew to perform this slight office for him.

"How beautiful!" he exclaimed, as the dark

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room revealed the window's picture—the lights of the city glittering among the dancing snow-flakes.

"I love it, my big Christmas tree," she answered, softly.

The sweetness of her stung him and he sighed sharply.

"Do you know that until this moment, when I may be going to lose it, I have not fully realized what your faith means to me? Yet, I must tell you."

"I am certain that it will make no difference," she hastened to assure him. "You took me on faith; should I do less for you?"

"Wait; you don't know."

"I have heard rumors."

"That I've been guilty of the same crime towards another woman that has caused you so much misery?"

"Oh, I don't believe it!" and she threw out her hands as if to ward off an impending calamity. "*You* could never have lied to a woman."

"No, I didn't lie to her; but I took her—a woman whom I did not love. There was a child—six months after it was born she died. My—the child died, too."

She waited breathlessly for more, then offered the justification he withheld. "But you must have suffered terribly—and would have made amends if you could."

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“ Yes; but that is no excuse, nor of any use now that they are both dead.”

“ I am sure there must have been some extenuating circumstances,” she continued to plead.

“ Heaven forbid that I should be cad enough to offer any! ”

“ And you wouldn’t to Mrs. Lane, either, for the good that you knew you could do with her money? ” His silence condemned the question. “ Forgive me! of course you couldn’t. But she did have the decency to ask you for them, didn’t she? ”

“ Yes; and the poor old soul was awfully upset by the conflict between her desire to carry out her husband’s wishes and her religious convictions. It seems that her clergyman has been advising my moral unfitness—along with foreign missions.”

“ But how stupid of her not to see that the very fact that you would not defend yourself proves your fitness—now.”

“ Thank you for that. But society doesn’t reason that way; and still less so when it’s the woman. We’ve not changed much in this respect since the days of *The Scarlet Letter*; we’ve only changed the stigmata. The woman still bears the brunt of this pitiful martyrdom of sex—how often and how pitifully few, excepting we physicians, know. A French *confrère*

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speaks of it as the 'endless martyrology of marriage, the saddest page I know.' So, you see, it's but simple justice that, once in a way, a man should pay double price. My lost hospital was to have been my expiation. It was what it could have done for women—for the mothers and the babies, that was, of all I'd hoped from it, nearest to my heart. A tremendous work, too, embracing as it does so many branches of modern medicine. With this enormous sum of money at my command, I could have built up a great educational center; met a great need:—the medical school as an adjunct to the hospital and the laboratory with an endowment sufficient to command the best brains in the market. We rarely get them now, as most of the positions are so poorly paid that they don't offer a man the possibility of a decent living, much less maintaining a home and family; a desire for which we would seem to consider foreign to the nature of this particular genus—the unfortunate devotee of medical science. The result of this stupid economic blunder is, of course, to deflect the best talent to practical medicine, thereby putting a premium on disease."

"But surely his conscience and love of his work——"

"We have to deal with men, my dear child, not sublimated egos. Though it may be most

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reprehensibly material of us, we have not yet learned to feed and clothe our bodies with love—and, until the police have embraced Christian Science, it won't be safe to try. But, be it said to the honor of the best men among us, they are constantly working against their own interests by advising the prophylactic measures that send their patients off to the quack for the pill and the lotion, the ignorant belief in which is so strong that the fee without the prescription is considered a conspiracy of the modern physician to get something for nothing. We have the stupendous task before us of teaching the lay community that the largest factor in the pathology of the future is sanitary science. And I'd hoped to teach this to as many women as men. Margaret Mills and I were planning special lectureships to ground them in the knowledge of eugenics and nutrition, without which no woman is fit to be a mother. We boast of our civilization—call ourselves scientific, while the fashioning of the most important, the most delicate and complex—the human instrument is left to ignorance and chance. That this negligence, more awful in its results than you have any conception of, is atavistic rather than civilized, is axiomatic to the sociologist—the world-old dreamer under his new name."

" 'The man who hopes to confer happiness upon mankind,' " she quoted. " And you, John

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Rathbone, are one of those dreamers, in spite of your negation of happiness."

"I am, Claire Raymond, if health be happiness; and if it be dreaming to visualize a future in which infectious and hereditary disease, along with poverty, charity, and idleness, shall be looked upon as barbarities antedating civilization. To dream thus is the antitoxin of despair," he finished, with a smile.

"As if despair existed in your scheme of things, you superman. I wonder if you have any conception of how magnificent you are. In the face of a stunning, heart-breaking disappointment such as this you can joke and talk of your shattered hopes in terms of world movements. When you began talking to me to-night my heart was bursting with sympathy for you; and now, to offer it would seem to belittle the grandeur of you."

"You think me much stronger than I am, little Claire. Your sympathy—the assurance that you still believe in me—it means——" his voice faltered and he rose, advancing a few steps towards her.

Dizzily, for the beating of her heart, she found herself groping for safety. Between them a serpent had reared its head, and she fled for the protection of light. Having turned it on, she stood confused; not daring to look at him for the hurt that she might see in his eyes.

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Her fear fled as quickly as it had come, and she hated herself for her cowardice and cruelty.

"My weakness is not of the sort that *you* need to fear," he gently reproached.

"Oh, believe me, it isn't you I fear! It's an indefinable—a possible——" her voice broke on it, and she dropped into the nearest chair, burying her face in her handkerchief.

From the hand that in another instant was stroking her hair, she had no wish to escape. In that touch there was too exquisite a comfort; the same that had quieted her delirium, seeking nothing, now as then, but to soothe.

"How sad it is that you and I should cause each other an instant's pain. You shall never shed another tear because of me—if I can help it."

"Don't, don't!" she wailed. "You make me feel a perfect worm. You're always giving to me, while I seem always to be failing you."

Moving away from her to the back of the room, he replied: "One can only give what one has to give. You have given me your friendship, and that is very dear to me—remember that."

The finality of his last words was emphasized by the click of the door handle followed by a pause, as if he waited for her to turn or speak; but she did neither; and not until the door closed, did she look up to find that he had gone.

XXI

It would be difficult to find a more certain test of mental astigmatism than one's viewpoint of the journalistic decimation of the word "great" as applied to one's self or to others.

The morning after her second appearance in public, Claire lay in bed devouring the hyperbolic praises of the critics anent the "masterly and poetic rendering of the *Schumann Quintette* by the world-renowned B. Quartette and the new star in the musical firmament, Miss Claire Raymond."

The stress of the week's preparation had kept her mind from dwelling overmuch upon the distressing termination of John's last visit. There had been, however, a never wholly dispelled uneasiness lest it foreshadowed a change in their friendship. How much she had come to depend upon it she did not know, and found herself unwilling to face alternatives. A note from him in the morning's mail, written in his old teasing vein, brought her no slight relief. Without preface, it began:

If the public does turn your head, you spoiled darling of the gods, it will be out of revenge for what you have done to it. That part of it which sat near me to-night, you and

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your long-haired friends reduced to a state of complete imbecility. Their rhapsodies knew no bounds. Even the ushers did not escape the infection. The one whom I sent to ascertain if you might again be in need of medical attention, returned to tell me that you were already buried—in flowers, furs, and admirers; but looking “radiantly beautiful.” Groaning at the anticipation of your speedy ruin, I took a hasty departure to save some of my clinic patients from a burial of another sort at the hands of one of my new assistants; a dreadful young fanatic, who, I believe, would decapitate his own grandmother, for very joy of cutting.

Let me hear as to the aftermath; and believe me,
always your friend,

JOHN RATHBONE.

Always her friend! If only that might be; always to feel that she could call on him when she needed him and that he would come to her as she knew that he would come now, ready to give more than he offered and asking no wage of love; leaving her free to follow her art and to give him only what was his by right of her choice. Her heart craved, while her reason denied the possibility. He was a man, and men did not love thus out of the world of romance. It were folly to think of it, even. Had she not forsworn dependence upon human loves? Her music was the safest friend; that would never fail her, and the laurels it was winning her were passing sweet.

A message from Marian, saying that she was on a case at the Rathbone Sanatorium and wanted to see her before noon, roused her to

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action; which, if it did not banish John from her thoughts, at least helped her to a better understanding of him.

“What is the matter?” exclaimed Claire, as her cousin entered the waiting room in Sixtieth Street.

Marian threw herself wearily into a chair. “The matter is that Mabel was operated on here three days ago and is in a very critical condition.”

“Why *didn't* you let me know?”

“Because of the concert. I didn't want to worry you—and it was all so sudden. You know that I've been trying to get her to consult Doctor Rathbone all winter. Without saying a word about it she went to see him on Monday morning: she sent for me in the afternoon and the next morning he operated. She begged him to do it as soon as possible as she couldn't stand waiting for it. She has been so plucky through it all.”

“Has she suffered much?”

“Terribly; and will continue to—if she lives.”

“Oh, Marian! is it as bad as that?”

“Yes,” and Marian wiped away a tear. “It's a wonder she pulled through at all: the condition was awful. How she has kept up and around this past month is a mystery to me. It was her naturally strong constitution, I sup-

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pose. You know how strong she always was—until she married? ”

“ What’s her being married got to do with it? ”

“ Why——” Marian hesitated and looked out of the window; “ she hasn’t been any too happy.”

“ You’re evading me, Marian. What is the matter with her? ”

“ I’ll tell you, perhaps, after I’ve talked with Alfred. You knew, didn’t you, that he’d gone on a cruise to Panama? ”

“ No, *I didn’t* know.”

“ I’ve telegraphed; but it may be days before he gets it. Yes, Miss Holmes; ” and Marian went to meet the nurse standing in the doorway.

“ Mrs. Lawrence is asking for another hyperdermic. She seems in great pain, and says that you will give it to her.”

“ Not until time’s up: I’ve given her an extra one already.”

The nurse left and Marian returned to Claire. “ It’s terrible to see her suffer so and be unable to relieve her.”

“ I’ve come to relieve *you*, and send you off to bed,” said Mrs. Mills, emphatically, as she entered the room. “ You *are* an obstreperous family. I can’t make one of you respect discipline.”

“ I can’t sleep,” protested Marian.

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"I'd like to see one of my nurses question my authority thus. Come, off with you this minute! You can rest, at least," and putting a motherly arm about Marian she led her from the room. Returning in a few moments she carried Claire off to her own quarters, where, the door being closed, she pointed to the big chair by the fire; which invitation always meant that she had time for a chat.

"Well, my dear, you and your Quartette achieved a great triumph, I hear. How does it feel to be getting famous?"

"Glorious!—not the notoriety, but knowing that the public wants what you've got to give it. But I feel a brute to be talking like this with poor Mabel lying there suffering so. Won't you tell me what's the matter with her and what she's had done?"

"You blessed innocent! don't you know that it's against all professional etiquette to divulge such things? Even Mrs. Lawrence herself doesn't know."

"But surely *she* has the right to know."

"John happens to hold the same revolutionary theory and will tell her as soon as she's a little stronger. Poor child! She's too weak and in too much pain to care yet."

"Has the doctor seen her this morning?"

"Yes, and says that she's holding her own pretty well."

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“ That’s encouraging. Is he here now? ”

“ No, he’s gone out of town for a consultation—after having been up most of the night. But, with all that he had to do, he made time to go to your concert. Do you realize how fortunate you are, you little minx, to have won the friendship of that splendid big brother of mine? ”

“ Indeed I do; and I know, too, how little I deserve it. Isn’t it a shame about the hospital? I’d like to shake that old idiot of a Mrs. Lane for treating him as she has. Although he’s so splendid about it, I know that it must have been a frightful disappointment.”

“ It has gone pretty deep—deeper than he’ll admit, even to himself; and he’s working himself to the point of exhaustion not to think about it.”

After a slight pause, Claire exclaimed impulsively: “ I wonder if you’ll tell me something, Mrs. Mills.”

“ Ask and see.”

“ He told me about his child the other night; but so little, only that both it and the mother died. He speaks of it as if it were an unforgivable sin. I can’t believe that, and I’d so like to know more—if it won’t be a breach of confidence, of course.”

“ I suppose he told it to you as he did to me;

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giving the main, brutal facts without a softening or superfluous word."

"Yes, just that."

"This is the one thing about which John is not sane. He continues to consider himself wholly responsible for that miserable affair, notwithstanding the facts learned by Doctor Marlitt; which, long since, convinced both him and me that John was much more sinned against than sinning. Instead of its being a breach of confidence to tell you these facts, I feel it's only just to him that you should know them. It's the old story of the student in Paris, the girl of the Latin Quarter, and its demoralizing liberty. She was the daughter of the *concierge* of the building in which John and Doctor Marlitt lived, and, of course, very pretty; with the charming manners and musical accent so often, and so unaccountably, found among Parisian women of her class. Doctor Marlitt says that they were all—mother, father, and daughter—a bad lot. But, somehow, the girl had kept free of entanglements with men up to the time that she met John; probably because she rated her charms higher than the opportunities she'd had till then. She must have thought them rich—they always dressed well and lived better than most of the students in the Quarter. It seems that she was always lying in wait for them, and they fell into the

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habit of taking her out to the *cafés* for supper. They not only found her amusing, but talking with her was good practice for their French. Doctor Marlitt says that she was determined to get one of them and really didn't care which; that it only happened to be John because he—Doctor Marlitt—had to go off to London and leave John at her mercy. It was, of course, the bottle of wine too much. John confesses to that; but he will never admit what Doctor Marlitt is perfectly certain of—that the girl followed him to his empty rooms, and that it was she who did the seducing. When Doctor Marlitt returned from London, he found John actually arranging to marry her. This he prevented only by paying the miserable crew a large sum to disappear. He then carried John off to Vienna. Two years later they returned to Paris, and, as bad luck would have it, John met the father on the street. He told him that his daughter had had a child by him and died of a broken heart six months afterwards. To make a long story short, John brought his baby home to me, and has looked upon himself as a criminal ever since."

"Was there no doubt as to its being his child?"

"No; she was too like him, and the loveliest little human flower I ever saw. I thought he'd go out of his mind when she died. But I'm for-

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getting to tell you that Doctor Marlitt's suspicions led him to investigate the girl's death. He found that she had died of pneumonia after having become the mistress of a rich old man, for whom she'd deserted her child. They put that lovely baby into a foundling asylum."

"But why does he consider himself so much to blame, with all this proof of bad character and heartlessness?"

"Exactly what I've asked him many times, my dear. His only answer to which is that he was the first to start her on the down grade, and that had it not been for him, she might have married a decent man and been alive still. Had Doctor Marlitt, or another, been the victim, he would have found plenty of excuses for them; but for himself he will offer none. That is John. How many men, do you suppose, would have had the courage to face his world with an illegitimate child, when it would have been so easy to have left it in Paris?"

With a tender pride in her friend, Claire dwelt upon this question on her way home; and, by the joy that she felt in finding neither treachery nor cowardice in his story, so long wondered about, realized how much she had feared the possibility of a definite reason for distrusting him.

XXII

LEANING from the window of Mabel's room, Marian was drinking in deep draughts of the fresh morning air, cleansed of the city's dust by a night's hard rain. Drawing in her head, she exclaimed:

"Such a delicious morning as it is! The spring will be here to stay by the time you're ready to go home, Mopsy;" a nickname Marian had given her sister, as a child, because of her mop of thick, golden hair.

Mabel's heavy lids opened and narrowed, as she replied: "I'm not going home. I shall never go there again."

"Never go home! What *do* you mean?"

"I mean what I say. There's no use keeping up the bluff any longer, Sis. I know perfectly well what's the matter with me—and what my operation's been. I know, too, who's responsible for it all; and I shall never see nor speak to him again."

"Oh, Mab! you can't mean that. You *must* give him a chance to explain—there are other ways. I can't believe that Alfred has been unfaithful to you—he loves you so."

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"Loves me so!" the blood rushing into her white, sunken cheeks; "loves me so that he's caused me the agony of these past weeks, made it impossible for me ever to have any children, and barely escaped killing me."

"But he may not have known—that is possible."

"I don't believe it. But even if he didn't, that wouldn't excuse him. What right has anyone not to know about a thing that can have such frightful consequences? And what right had Aunt Julia to let me marry without telling me of these things? You must have known; why didn't you tell me?"

"I didn't know then—the awful extent of it, I mean:" and Marian generously refrained from reminding her sister how she had used every other argument against her loveless marriage.

"Doctor Bonner certainly knew. He should have warned me."

"It's a pretty difficult thing for physicians to do."

"And being difficult, of course they shirk it. Doctor Rathbone didn't—not being the miserable coward that most men are: and he not only told me, but has written to Alfred."

"No; there's no cowardice there," Marian acquiesced.

"And he doesn't lie, either" Mabel con-

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tinued her passionate protest. "I asked him how long it would be before I could really be well again; and he told me that it was impossible to say. I may never be. Look at Adele Spenser: she's never been well since her operation—and that was six years ago. Did you know that her baby was such a horror that the doctors let it die? Was that lovely husband of hers responsible for that, too?"

"I'm afraid so," answered Marian, reluctantly.

"Oh, to think that men can do such things to women and go unpunished!" Again the blood suffused the white face and the weak voice trembled. "And it's called love! It's murder! that's what it is."

Marian put her fingers on her sister's pulse, saying anxiously, "Don't talk about it now, Mab dear; it's sending your temperature up again."

"Temperature! Are you a perfect machine to talk of temperature in the face of things like this? What harm does it do to talk about it, when I can think of nothing else? I lie here thinking until I feel as if I should go mad."

At her wits' end to know how to either stop or soothe her, Marian went in search of Mrs. Mills, who offered to relieve her.

"I find, Miss Leighton, that it's better to let them talk it out; and it generally decreases their

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sense of individual outrage to let them know some of the figures. To know one's self a general, instead of a particular, victim, deflects sympathy to others; and, you know, abstract pity is less conducive to—well, a temperature. Go up on the roof and get some air while I see what I can do with her.”

When Mrs. Mills entered Mabel's room, she was greeted with:

“Marian sent you. She's been blabbing.”

Too used to the querulousness of pain to treat it other than sympathetically, Mrs. Mills answered quietly: “Your poor sister is in such distress about you that I sent her up to the roof, and have come to have a little chat with you myself—that is, if you feel like talking.”

“That's exactly what I do feel like, and Marian keeps telling me it's bad for me. It's far worse, I can tell you, to think and think until you can't think sanely. Please tell me honestly, Mrs. Mills, will I ever get my health back?”

“The doctor told me yesterday that he had seen few more perfect physical specimens than yourself; and that is much in your favor. I wish the patient who left us this morning had your constitution. Poor woman; it was her second operation in three years, during which time she has never known a well day.”

“Married?”

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"Yes; most of our patients are married women."

"And is that their disease?—marriage, I mean."

"With at least three-quarters of them."

"Is it safe for *any* woman to marry?" gasped Mabel.

"According to the statistics of many of our specialists, which our experience here corroborates, from sixty to seventy out of every hundred men are a possible menace to the life and health of a woman and her children."

"Oh, how awful! I had no idea it was as bad as that."

"So bad, my dear, that it has come to be called the Great Black Plague. It is not only more prevalent than tuberculosis, but than all other infectious diseases combined. It has even been stated that but one-half the population of the civilized world has escaped it. It is filling our reformatories, prisons, and institutions for the feeble-minded and insane, until we are coming to recognize it—along with alcoholism—the main factor in race degeneration."

"But why isn't everyone told this? And why isn't everyone——" she stopped, dazed by what her weakened brain could not wholly grasp.

"I suppose you were going to say, doing something to prevent it. There are many rea-



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sons, of course. Here is one: During one year, in this city alone, fifty-seven million dollars are said to have been spent in this human exploitation that it would be an insult to animals to call brutal; for their instinctive adherence to natural laws, in the reproductive function, is compatible with hygiene. Another reason is, that the initial breeding places of this—the greatest epidemic the world has ever known, which, merely as known sources of infection, should be under the control of the Board of Health, are solely within the jurisdiction of the Police Department; whose method of control is summed up in one word—graft.”

“ But why isn’t there a law against their existing at all? ”

“ There is; but it isn’t enforced. No laws are which go counter to the desires of the enfranchised majority: and the enfranchised majority here consists entirely of one sex, that dares not repeal this law, but spends millions of dollars a year to support the institutions that it declares illegal.”

“ Do you think women could enforce it if they had the vote? ”

“ I think that self-preservation is the strongest law in life; and that a condition which renders thousands upon thousands of women and children victims of painful and horrible diseases, through no fault of their own; a condition

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from which they gain nothing and lose so much, is a condition that *seventy per cent. of them* would not be subsidizing but up and fighting; and, if they were enfranchised, fighting to some purpose. The fear of how successfully they might make war against it makes the vicious element in our cities the most powerful enemy of woman suffrage. Commercialized vice is the strongest ally of the 'antis.' "

" And to think that I've been one! "

" Have you? " and Mrs. Mills could not repress a smile. " Well, I hope you'll cease being one from this moment."

" I'll join the Woman Suffrage Party this very day," replied Mabel, with grim determination—" this minute," she added, as her sister opened the door. " Marian, give me the table and some note paper."

Mrs. Mills explained: " We've had a most satisfactory talk, Miss Leighton, as well as a profitable one. I've won your sister over to suffrage."

" Not really? "

" Yes, really," mimicked Mabel. " If you'd told me what Mrs. Mills just has, I'd have joined long ago; but you only kept talking about its being our right."

Mrs. Mills rose. " Now you know it for a necessity, don't you?—and something to work for," she added, tentatively, with a glance at



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Marian. " I'll send you in a pamphlet on white slavery and an article on child labor, that I've just been reading, which will show you another reason for working for it."

" Please do, and Sis can read them to me: " which Marian did, after administering a sedative that soon left her reading to deaf ears.

XXIII

MABEL, frail and lovely in Irish lace and chiffon of her favorite blue, sat propped up with pillows on a chaise longue, beside an open window in Mrs. Fanshawe's new town house overlooking the Park. That amiable and rotund lady, in a bright, coral-pink *negligée*, sat at her desk trying to dispose of some of her morning's mail, consisting, for the most part, of appeals for money from the many charitable organizations of which she was an actual, or persistently sought after, member. Having disposed of a small portion of it, she rose, and picking up a piece of fancy work, sat down near Mabel.

"Is it one o' the bad days?" she asked.

"I do feel pretty seedy; and I'm worried, too, Jane, about keeping you in town when you're so fond of the country at this time of year."

"When I spend most of it on the train," Mrs. Fanshawe scolded. "If it weren't for you, I'd never have found out what a rest it is to spend May in town. I can't remember when I've been able to do all the things I wanted to and get enough sleep at the same time. The

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only trouble is, it's makin' me so fat. Guess I'll have to cut out lunch."

"You certainly do go an awful pace, Jane, when you're in town. I often wonder how you stand it."

"Well, to begin with, I'm pretty strong; and then, I keep from gettin' bored by havin' some really interestin' things to do."

"Of course, you do a lot of good," Mabel replied; "but I can't, for the life of me, see how you manage to get so much enjoyment out of it."

"That's because you haven't tried it, my dear. You've still got to learn that nothin' makes you feel quite so pleased with yourself as bein' a public benefactor. Then, too, you can go callin' east o' the Bowery in an old skirt that you don't run the risk of breakin' your neck in every time you take a step: and those people over there don't care a damn about your grammar. Now don't be horrified; but the awful truth is that I feel more at home with them than with many of the set you were born into and I wasn't. It's like gettin' off your corsets and into a wrapper. There's no use, if you come o' workin' people, you find work a heap sight easier than loafin'. I guess it's in the blood. The way most of you waste each other's time, huntin' pleasure that you don't find, gets on my nerves so, sometimes, that it makes me want

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to go down to the laundry and do a good day's washin'."

"You're too absurd, Jane. And I deny that we loaf. I'm sure I never seemed to have a moment to spare, until I got ill."

"But, at the end of the year, what have you got to show for it?—in somethin' solid, I mean."

"I don't know that I have anything—but I wasn't idle."

"Of course not. One's always horribly, nerve-rackin'ly busy in this social game—that I'm not sayin' hasn't its attractions; but most of it's just a big conspiracy to kill time and get rid o' the money we don't know how to spend. I can't even get a miserable hundred thousand dollars to endow that children's ward at the B. Hospital."

"Won't Jim give it to you?"

"Jim's got a scheme on just now that's eatin' up all the spare cash; and this thing ought to be done straight off. It's a perfect crime to leave those infected children in the tenements with nothin' bein' done for 'em. And the're so many of 'em, it makes you sick. It's perfectly outrageous the way our hospitals don't supply the wards that are needed for 'em. It's bad enough that men give their wives and children their rotten diseases; but, then, that they won't provide the hospital care that they need to cure

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'em—it makes you hot under the collar; particularly when you read what the vice commissions say about half the men that support prostitution bein' married."

"Do you know, Jane, I'm beginning to wonder that any women stay with their husbands."

"That's the way it always makes you feel, at first."

"And then?" questioned Mabel.

"Why, then, you get up and do somethin' about it, of course. Doctor Rathbone's been kickin' up such a row that, at last, the city's promised the money for a special hospital. But it's goin' to be over on North Brothers' Island, and will only hold a hundred patients—a mere drop in the bucket. It's a rotten shame he lost the Lane money—he'd have done such a lot for the whole city with it."

"How did it happen, do you know?"

"No; I've only seen what he's quoted as sayin' about its bein' so much more important that a nurse should know how to keep from talkin' than say the creed. Old lady Lane's too saintly to see any joke in that. It's all only gossip, of course, but the general idea seems to be that it was on account of his not belongin' to any church."

"Did you ever hear anything about his wife, Jane?"

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“ Only that she was a Frenchwoman, and died leavin’ him the kiddie that he lost, too.”

“ He must have been very devoted to her never to have married again.”

“ Or so unhappy,” suggested the more practical Mrs. Fanshawe. “ It’s more likely to be that, as no one seems to have heard him speak of her.”

“ It is more likely,” Mabel agreed, acridly; “ marriage being the dismal failure that it seems to be all round. However have you and Jim managed to keep the good friends that you are? ”

“ By each havin’ our own jobs and not tryin’ to boss each other’s, I suppose. And talkin’ of husbands, have you decided what you’re goin’ to do with yours? I wish you’d give him another chance, Mabel. Your aunt won’t take you back; you can’t live without any money; and you can’t get a divorce—at least here.”

“ No, more’s the shame! This kind of woman-and-child slaughter being considered no crime by our chivalrous New York men. Do you know that in Norway it’s punishable by five years’ imprisonment? ”

“ Only if it can be proved willful, my lady. Doctor Bonner’s letter leaves no doubt that Alfred thought himself cured: and even you can’t believe he’s been unfaithful to you. I, for one, feel mighty sorry for him.”

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“ And how about me? ”

“ Of course, I feel much more sorry for you, you poor child; and you know it. But be practical. Alfred will live with you on any terms you make, if you'll have him under the same roof with you—or I don't know him. There's a lot o' good in him that's been goin' to waste, and, with a little patience and kindness, you could bring it out. Lord, child! we all have to put up with the rotten things men do: if we didn't, we'd never be able to manage 'em in any way. When I get cold feet thinkin' of how Jim makes his money, instead of tellin' him what I think of it—which he wouldn't understand or thank me for—I just take a drink and go out and spend it for him on some other woman; whose husband wouldn't hesitate to make it in the same way, if he could, but can't, with so large a C that his wife's doin' most of the work and the children goin' hungry. There's no use bangin' your head against a stone wall. The nice tricks a man hasn't learned by the time he gets married mighty few women can teach him, and the nasty ones you've got to put up with—if you want to get on with him at all.”

“ Well, I won't put up with them, for one,” answered beautiful, rebellious youth.

“ You will, my dear, when you get old enough to feel sorry for 'em; knowin' that, in the end,

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they always punish 'emselves. Look how Jim's got it in the neck this past year. I never felt sorrier for anybody in my life; though I don't dare show him I do. He's as proud as Lucifer—won't admit he's beaten. Poor Jim! "

" You've been a perfect brick to him, Jane."

" Fudge! But to come back to you, young woman: if you won't forgive Alfred, what *are* you goin' to do? "

" Marian will take me in until I'm strong enough to work."

" And do you really think, goosey, that either of us will let you spend the summer here in the heat, weak as you are? Until you've made up your mind to help Alfred spend his money to some purpose, you stay with me."

" You're a dear, Jane. I don't know what I'd have done——" and she stopped to control her voice.

" Jim says he loves to have beautiful women like you about; you're so ornamental," Mrs. Fanshawe filled in the gap, and, as there was no response but a sniffle, continued: " I certainly wouldn't let you go back to that old harridan of an aunt of yours, even if she'd take you. The whole thing, to begin with, has been her doin's. She wasn't goin' to let the Lawrence fortune get by the Leighton family if she could help it. And what did she care if your life was spoiled in gettin' it? If you'd asked me,

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knowin' you didn't care a straw for Alfred, I'd have advised you not to do it. But now that you have done it, and married a man that has as much good in him—why, my dear, Alfred's the one man of your set that takes any real interest in my poor people. He's lookin' after several of 'em now; and I'll bet he's never told you a word about it—has he? "

" No."

" And who's to blame for that? I suppose the poor boy thought it'd bore you. But really, Mabel, to throw away all the chances for a big, useful life, that Alfred's money means, is not a thing to do in a hurry. Think what fun it'd be to give Doctor Rathbone enough to build a hospital just for women and children, where they could have him treat 'em and get good nursin', and all the rest, free."

" I'd love to do that," Mabel agreed. " And it would make up to him a little for Mrs. Lane's throwing him over, wouldn't it? "

" I was thinkin' more of the women and the kiddies," said Mrs. Fanshawe, dryly.

" May I speak to you a moment, Mrs. Fanshawe? " a voice came from the doorway leading into Mrs. Fanshawe's bedroom.

" Yes, Luigia; what is it? "

" I've finished all the lace you gave me."

Mrs. Fanshawe thought a moment. " You can ask Mrs. O'Brien to let you look over the

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things in the laundry. Several of the table doilies need mendin'."

"Yes, madam;" and Luigia withdrew.

"What a tragic face that woman has," commented Mabel. "She's had a past, or I'm very much mistaken."

"Rather; she was a prostitute."

"And you take her into your house!"

"Why not?"

"How do you know that she isn't a thief, as well?"

"I don't. I only know she's a poor, down thing with one foot in the grave, and the best woman at lace I ever had."

"How did you get hold of her?"

"Through one of my laundresses that comes in by the day. They lived in the same tenement."

"You do take risks, Jane."

"The risk isn't half as great for you and me to have 'em doin' our housework as walkin' the streets—which you ought to know by this time. And how are we ever goin' to stop 'em if we don't give 'em a chance to get out o' the life? All the poor things I've had here have been so grateful for just bein' taken in that they've been much more faithful, as well as honest, than many an airy piece I've had from an office. Most of them think they've got as much right to my clothes as I have myself. For

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years I've had to lock up all my gloves and veils to keep 'em from walkin' off—for, of course, no one ever takes 'em. Can you manage to keep yours? "

" I don't know. I take it for granted that Julie looks after them. I certainly haven't time to bother about those things."

" And this is the girl who talks about livin' on nothin' a year and earnin' her own livin'! If you weren't sick——" The telephone bell interrupted her and she went to answer it. After an exchange of greetings she put her hand over the mouthpiece and, turning to Mabel, asked, " Will you see Brooke? He wants to come up."

Mabel shook her head, and Mrs. Fanshawe turned to the telephone again. " Sorry, Brooke, but it's one of her bad days and she isn't up to talkin'." . . . " Yes, I'll tell her. Good-by." Hanging up the receiver, she returned to her chair by the window. " He says he's so sorry, and hopes you'll be able to see him soon. Why *won't* you? "

" What's the use?—we only quarrel; and I feel such a loathing for the whole male sex that I don't want to see any of them."

" Except our doctor."

" One forgets that he's a man, he's so clean and fine."

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“ Oh, does one? I wouldn't bank on that, he's too big and good-lookin'.”

With a little jerk of impatience Mabel turned her head towards the window; and Mrs. Fanshawe, with a vigorous oath over a forgotten errand, went to her dressing room; wondering how much of Mabel's reluctance to see Hawkes was attributable to the unquestionably masculine magnetism of “ our doctor.”

XXIV

IN his own particular sanctum, on the first floor of his big, empty house, Alfred Lawrence lay on a Morris couch, his muscular legs crossed high above the level of his head, chewing the end of a cigarette and the bitterest reflections of his life.

The high-ceilinged, wainscoted room had doubtless been planned for a study, but it held no accessories to knowledge other than of horse-flesh; unless the beautiful stag's head with its branching antlers hanging over the fireplace and the superb tiger's skin stretched before it—none of the pain of the death-struggle showing in their staring, glass eyes—bespoke one of evolution's paradoxes:—the brutal lust for killing that is called sport. A soft light shone down upon the flushed, boyish face from two heavily wrought bronze lamps that stood at each end of the long table, against which the couch backed, as if of a piece with it. Tiffany glass gleamed through the interstices of the grilled shades; lambent spots of color, golden as autumn sunshine among brown and yellow leaves. For the rest, the table held an untidy

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litter of papers, sporting magazines, gloves, bits, spurs, riding crops, and other horse paraphernalia. A musical chime pealed from a wainscot clock in a dim corner, and Alfred listened to its nine strokes, impatient of their deliberate slowness. To his sick mind they seemed as weighted with weariness and ennui as the endless hours of his days.

The door-bell rang, and a footman in the blue and buff of the Lawrence liveries entered.

"There's a woman to see you, sir. She won't give her name, but says you know her."

"Send her in."

The man hesitated. "Will you want the car, sir?—it's been waiting since eight o'clock, and it's raining hard."

"I'd forgotten it. Send it away—no, let it wait."

Wordless, the man turned and left the room.

The woman who next entered it, Alfred rose to greet with a distant "Good-evening."

"Clean forgotten me, Peachy, haven't you? My vanity does get some pretty bad jars these days when I meet an old pal."

"Well, I'm blessed! if it isn't Dago Lou," and he shook her warmly by both hands. "Where did *you* drop from?"

"Not from heaven, Freddy. And to look at you, I shouldn't say you'd been spendin' your evenin's of late where blessin's are handed

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round with the highballs. What's up, old boy? You look as if you needed a change of air—not to mention drinks. Take my advice and hitch up to the water-wagon for a while."

He drew a chair up to the fire for her and returned to his couch.

"I *was* glad to see you, Luigia; but if you're going to preach——"

"Don't worry. I'm not virtuous enough for that, yet."

"Yet? For heaven's sake! are you going into a convent?"

"Not for mine, thanks—no smokin' allowed. Got an extra cigarette about your clothes?"

"Here you are," tossing her one, and after it a box of matches. As she put the cigarette between her lips and struck a match, he smiled.

"You don't look much like a nun just now, I must admit; but, you know, it would never surprise me to hear that that was your finish. You had such a queer, damned religious streak in you. I wonder if it was what made you different from the rest; for you were different—whiter, somehow."

"Always a perfect lady, of course. Our job's such a ladylike one!—a bit too *au naturel* for that, eh, what?"

He smiled again. "At any rate, you girls know how to amuse a man and make him feel—er—comfortable."

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"Just so!" she agreed, with thinly veiled irony.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Didn't I just tell you I was a perfect lady, and isn't it a lady's business to make a man—er—comfortable? If we didn't, we wouldn't be long on the job, see! Anyhow, it wasn't due to my angelic disposition."

"That's no idle jest," he replied, with a reminiscent smile. "What a devil of a temper you did have! Do you remember the night that you gave Spenser such a black eye he couldn't go home for a week?"

"Yes, I do; slimy hound that he was!"

"Is, you mean. He's a rotter clear through, and you didn't give him half he deserved. But tell me about yourself, old girl—that black dress——"

"Looks sort of uncomfortably respectable, don't it?" she mocked.

"It does; and I, for one, am getting pretty sick of respectability." He jumped up and began moving restlessly about the room. "Have a drink?"

"No, thanks. I've cut that out—found it didn't agree with my health. Say," as he moved closer to her, "will you sit down? You get on my nerves. Somethin' seems to have got on yours, too. Been sittin' up here all by yourself, night after night, with nothin' but

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that, I suppose," pointing to the decanter at his elbow; "because when you're full you feel—er—comfortable."

"Chuck it, Lou! I'm damned if I don't believe you *have* turned respectable, and are learning how to nag."

"Just joshin' you, Peachy, for your own good; for if you keep this up much longer, I see *your* finish—a brandy-peach so over pickled it's good for nothin' but the garbage pail. Lord! you men haven't got horse sense. Think of havin' your health and just sittin' down and chuckin' it away."

"What difference does it make if I do? no one cares a damn."

"You'll care fast enough when you've done it, and are up against it—as I am."

"Are you, old girl?" he answered, with ready sympathy. "I'm awfully sorry. Can't something be done about it? If it's only a question of doctor's bills and the rest—I'd be glad, you know——"

"No doctor livin' can mend you when you're really busted; and I'm it. It's because I know what it feels like that I'm advisin' you to—— But don't let's get sloppy over it. I don't want any of your dough for myself, thanks, but I did come to ask for some for somebody else."

"For whom, then?"

"Your wife."

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He threw up his head haughtily. "We'll leave her out of this, if you please."

Her eyes flashed. "Freddy, my boy, you better come off that perch in double quick time. If you're fit to marry a decent woman—which you weren't—I'm fit to talk about her. It may be bad arithmetic, but it takes two to make one social evil, and if I'm a fallen woman—Lord! that name does gag me. I'll bet dollars to doughnuts a woman never invented it. Of course we fall down without your ever puttin' a finger on us, don't we? Queer birds, you men!—you still go on playin' the ostrich game, hidin' your heads under—well, if it's anybody's wings it isn't yours, but some poor woman's who's damn fool enough to forgive what your wife's game enough not to."

"How do you know that?" he asked, in open-mouthed amazement.

"I know, all right; and that's why you can't play any of this superior game with me. If there's any excuse for either of us for quittin' the straight and narrow way, it isn't you. If I'd had your chances I'd 'ave done it, I don't think. It's an easy guess that those that call it the easiest way for a woman, never tried it. It's an easy way to the hospital or Greenwood, all right. But I'm not goin' to quarrel with you, and I *am* goin' to talk about your wife."

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"Fire away!" he answered. "I'm sorry I hurt your feelings, Lou; I didn't mean to."

"Now you're talkin'! Well, here it is without any frills. I came around here to-night to show you that your job is to hand over several millions, more or less, to your wife for a woman's hospital she's dead set on seein' built."

"How do you know she is?"

"Heard her say so."

"The devil you did!—where?"

"In the house of Mrs. James D. Fanshawe, where I splice lace from nine A.M. to six P., and nearly pass away for want of a smoke."

"Well, I'll be damned! However did you fool old Fanshawe?"

"Didn't. She's no lady, she's a woman. But that's our business; here's yours. Sewin'-room's next the madam's, bedroom door's not always closed, and——"

"You listen to what's none of your business," he broke in, angrily.

"*You're* no man, Freddy!—and if you don't hurry and grow up, you never will be anything but a gentleman. Your Fifth Avenue notions of honor do make me tired. They're about as moth-eaten as the Ten Commandments. If you ever do grow up, you'll learn that nothin's right or wrong except somebody's hurt. You need to come round to our suffrage meetin's on Thursday afternoons, and get educated. The words

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those women sling round'd give you the ear-ache. It'd add a year to my life to see the faces of some of the hubbies I know, if they could blow in incog. and hear what wifey's sayin' about the Red Light District and us. She doesn't say they're led astray, either, or call us ladies of the camellias. One pink-and-white miss, home from college on her vacation, called us—what d'you think?—cesspools of infection! That's goin' some for eighteen. And, by God! the kid wasn't way off. Look what it's done to you—your wife—to me!" Pressing her hand to her heart, she gave a wry smile. "It's done for me, all right. I can't even enjoy myself and get excited, much less mad. Exhibit A in a eugenics congress is about all I'm good for."

"A what congress?"

"Say, Peachy, you *are* ignorant. Don't you read the papers?"

"Of course I do," he snapped.

"Now don't bite. I owe you one, remember, and I'm just hedgin'—to teach you patience." She rose. "And here's where I slope, so you won't begin askin' me questions I couldn't answer."

"But you *must* tell me——"

"No, I mustn't," she cut him off. "Don't forget I listened to what was none o' my business, and I'm not handin' it along. Stung!"

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"I'd like to shake you, Luigia. How do I know that she—my——" he stopped short.

"Well, what about She My?"

"She won't take a cent from me."

"You haven't tried her on this line, have you?"

"No."

"Well, you can take it from me, it's your one chance and a pretty sure winner—snatch it!" She turned towards the door, and he followed her into the hall, where the stronger light revealed her face more clearly.

"Gad!" he exclaimed, "but you do look seedy. The car's outside: I'll send you home in it."

She turned to him with a short laugh. "Say, that'd be a joke. Tableau! She My looks out of the window just as her car, as was, drives up, and sees her footman, as was, jump down to help out yours truly," making him a low curtsy.

"A taxi, then."

"For the likes o' me that wouldn't look much better. In my humble station o' life walkin's thought better for your health—even in a drenchin' rain. Back-stairs legs ain't supposed to get tired—and as for hearts! even to say you had one'd be puttin' on side."

"You'd crack jokes at your own funeral, Luigia, I do believe. But your heart's in the



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right place, old girl; and thank you very much for coming," grasping the hand she extended.

"Same to you, Freddy. You'd 'a' been all right if you hadn't been born on Fifth Avenue. Olive oil!"

XXV

THE first week of June found Mrs. Fanshawe and Mabel at The Gables. The Fanshawe estate, one of the largest in the country, was known on both sides of the Atlantic, less for its prize-winning fowl, chrysanthemums, and carnations, than for the princely hospitality of its great house and the art treasures that it contained. Built around three sides of a quadrangle, two of its wings conceived somewhat after the matchless *Hôtel de Ville* of Rouen, this new world *château* crowned one of the lower hills of the Berkshires; its graceful spire, pinnacles, and crocketed gables, making a sky line seldom seen out of France, and the more beautiful in that it had for background the skies of America. In designing the exterior, a determined architect had held consistently to the Flamboyant Gothic, and, defying protest, made of one wing a chapel; which these twentieth-century Hedonists had straightway consecrated to pleasure. Through one wet season it had been used for the godless purposes of a tennis court; and the deep lobby beneath the organ loft, its elliptical arch forming a perfect proscenium, had served many times as a stage.

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Needless to say, no altar filled the apse, a restful and cool spot on the hottest days of summer; for this Gothic gem was constructed of stone within as without. Beneath its three high windows of stained glass, three arched doorways framed distant views of hill and valley; the heavy wooden doors always standing open in good weather. Within the main entrance at the opposite end was the oft-desecrated lobby, formed by a gallery that spanned the nave and was screened from it by a series of delicately wrought Perpendicular arches, through which showed the deep reds and blues of some genuine thirteenth-century glass set in the rose window of the façade behind them. Leading up to it was a spiral stone staircase, the lace-like tracery of its carved balustrade copied from the exquisite *Escalier des Orgues* of *Saint Maclou*. The windows of the side walls were of the same height and Perpendicular design as those of the apse; but their leaded panes were transparent and let in a light, if not dim, yet religious according to modern ethics. On the wall spaces between them hung old tapestries, swords, lances, helmets, banners, and shields; some emblazoned with the arms of the royal houses of Normandy, Burgundy, and Navarre. Beneath them stood richly carved choir stalls, oak chests, confessionals, marble and Etruscan terra cotta benches and sarcophagi, sedan and throne



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chairs, suits of armor, shrines and fonts; none of later date than the sixteenth century.

Her head resting against the scarlet and gold orphrey-work of a chasuble thrown over the back of one of the stalls in the apse, Mabel sat watching the sun setting in a bank of dark clouds. A silky coated Russian wolf-hound lay stretched out on the velvety lawn that sloped down to an artificial lake, where the whitest of swans curved their slender necks to hiss if one of the haughty and over-presumptuous peacocks came too close. Sworn enemies they were, jealous as women of each other's fine feathers. The dog scorned both, and left them severely alone—since! Another peacock there had been, but he was no more. The day had been intensely hot, the evening was intensely still. As the light faded, the chapel grew shadowy, and did one look at them for long, the armored knights guarding the doorway leading to the main part of the house, the drawn curtains of which bulged slightly now and then, seemed to move stealthily, and the half-reclining figure of a woman on a sarcophagus to be slowly raising her head. A faint rumble of thunder was drowned by the music pealing from the organ beneath the talented fingers of Brooke Hawkes; who, as he played the Masses of Palestrina and Bach, fancied he could hear reverberating from the vaulted roof the *Gloria in Excelsis* of many

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a sweet, boyish treble hushed for centuries. A shaft of moonlight pierced the nave and crept towards the richest jewel in this rich setting. Slowly the white arms and neck and the pale satin of her clinging gown gleamed out of the shadows, and Mabel closed her eyes. The lovely form, immovable in the relaxation of its physical weakness, appeared as lifeless as the men of iron and the woman of stone. A dream woman she looked to James Fanshawe, as he pushed aside the curtains of the guarded doorway and paused beside the knight leaning on his sword. A sudden movement of his arm bringing it into contact with one of the gauntlets, the metal fingers gave an uncanny click. The place seemed bewitched; the surcharged atmosphere to breathe ominous suggestions of hidden creatures waiting to spring; of tremendous forces quiescent an instant ere they broke loose in devastating violence. Before them the force of his own personality seemed to shrink. Vague, disquieting images flitted through his brain. A strange feeling of impotence and incompleteness, of misdirected energies and futile achievement, stole over him. The beautiful woman in the moonlight and the man at the organ belonged in the setting; a flash of insight, and he knew that he did not and never could. He saw himself, the boy born in a hovel, the blot on the 'scutcheon of his house; which no child of

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his line would ever grace by right of inheritance, for he was childless. A bitter longing surged through him for the gifts of life and not its merchandise. He felt a sudden abhorrence of his victories:—bloodless, inanimate things bought; living, heart-bleeding things crushed. For a decade his brain had swayed the money markets of the world. Drunk with power, he had become a law unto himself; ruthless; fearless; remorseless; believing himself invincible. But one day his country summoned him before its highest tribunal for an accounting to the people. Since, with eyes that saw not, he passed through that gate where hope is left behind. Out of the phantasmagoria of the shadows Fear now gibbered at him behind a mask of love; and Envy, unmasked, hissed: “Liar, hypocrite, thief; deserving only of the felon’s fate.”—“To which none dared condemn me,” his pride flung back. And he knew that he lied; for the sentence that a craven council dared not pass upon him, the people had. Among them he still moved, but as a criminal at large; the sweetness of power turned to gall; triumphs, with none to applaud, to dust and ashes.

A louder peal of thunder mingled with the strains of Mozart’s death song; that tragic *Requiem*, written as his own, by the man who gave back to posterity the great gift Life had bestowed on him. And men valued it so little



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that they let it die through poverty, and buried the man none knows where.

Out in the night a scarlet woman crouched against the wall, seeing visions of her childhood, and weeping in an anguish of regret as she, too, looked into the face of Death.

XXVI

A BRILLIANT morning followed the storm. Before a northwest wind, cottony white clouds sped across an azure sky, playing hide-and-seek with the sun flashing out to turn the world a-glitter. Czar, the wolf-hound, chasing shadows on the lawn, spied a white skirt disappearing down the drive and started in pursuit, giving a bark of agonized ecstasy when Marian Leighton, for very joy of health and glory of the morning, challenged him to a race. Her two legs proving an absurdly inadequate match for his four, she soon stopped, laughing and breathless. Bounding back to her, the soft-eyed brute snuggled his long nose into her hand, pleading for the caresses that he got a-plenty, until, reaching the garden, he was handed over to one of the men: flower beds inspiring him with as little respect as did peacocks.

By devious paths, leading through masses of perfumed color, Marian reached the gate in the high wall that separated the garden from the woods extending for miles within the boundaries of the Fanshawe estate. Passing through it, and finding no trace of the brother-in-law who should have been there to meet her, she

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started down the wood road, little more than a path, that led to the turnpike in the valley below; which she all but reached ere she saw a horse and rider approaching at a gallop.

Alfred jumped from the saddle amid the usual profuse apologies for his characteristic tardiness.

"I couldn't *not* forgive you for it," was Marian's response as she returned his affectionate kiss—"I've enjoyed my walk too much. Oh, you beauty!" This last to the horse, over whose glassy, black neck she ran her hand.

"I'll have to tie her. Come, Lady;" and the mare followed Alfred from tree to tree until he chose the one to which he tethered her. "She's as affectionate as a dog," he praised, returning to Marian, who had taken a seat upon a log. Then, with ill-concealed impatience: "Well, will she accept it?"

"She'll not only accept it, but it's the first thing that she's shown the slightest pleasure over since—I don't know when. It was a positive stroke of genius on your part, Alfred. It almost seems as if it were telepathy; for it's the one thing that she really wants to do. Keep on like this, and there's no knowing what may happen. Do what she'll let you, but don't ask more—not for some time yet."

"I'd do anything, Marian, if she'll only forgive me some day! How is she this morning?"

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"These sudden changes of temperature cause a good deal of neuralgia; but she came down to dinner last night."

"I met Hawkes on the train," he said, gloomily. "I wonder if the best way I could make it up to her wouldn't be to blow my brains out and let her marry him."

"I believe your devotion to her is quite capable of it; but please don't, for I don't believe she'd take him now, at any price."

"What makes you think that?" he questioned, eagerly.

"Because I saw them meet. It was the first time she's seen him since the operation, and she was most placidly indifferent—and since, too, she's not been a bit the way she always used to be when he was about. She doesn't seem to care whether he's there or not."

"Well, that's the first good thing I've heard for an eternity. What do you think's happened?"

"I don't know—exactly. I'm only pretty sure it has happened. It may be because of Doctor Rathbone. He's a wonderful man, and has a great influence over all his patients. It was he who got her interested in the hospital scheme."

Alfred puzzled over it. "But why that should make her suddenly indifferent to Hawkes, I can't quite see."

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" Could any woman, really interested in anything worth while, continue to admire a man who does nothing worth while? " Marian elucidated, a little scornfully.

" I wonder if that's why she never cared for me—because I've done nothing, either."

" It may be, Alfred; " and her voice grew gentle. " Women love power in men; and power does not grow in idleness."

" Do you think she could ever come to care for me, Marian, if I were to do something—go into business, for instance? "

" You poor goosey! " and she gave his hand an affectionate pat. " The thing that you must do is something to make her proud of you; and you've got—oh, so much opportunity with all your money! Your duty is to spend your money, not make any more; and the philanthropies of to-day offer so many fascinating ways of doing it that I often wonder how those of you who have so much more than you know what to do with can possibly keep out of them. This splendid age of prevention keeps charity from being the heartbreaking business that it used to be:—an eternal patching of things broken beyond mending. Take this strike in New York—that would be a splendid thing for you to begin on. These women are asking for nothing but simple justice; an eight-hour day and a living wage."

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"And they ought to have it," agreed Alfred; "but I don't see how I can help them to get it."

"This is how you can. Go to the women organizers of the strike; get them to tell you the girls to whom the cutting off of their weekly wage means starvation or the streets, and supply that wage until they win their fight. I know one of these organizers. She's such a live wire that she'll stir your enthusiasm, or I'm much mistaken."

"Possibly," he said with an almost hopeless lack of enthusiasm. But Marian refused to give it up.

"But you will do it, won't you?"

"Don't think me a cad, Marian; but how can I feel much interest in anything? If you knew how I miss Mabel! And to know you've brought all this suffering on the person you love most——" He turned his head to conceal a twitching face.

Marian put her hand on his shoulder. "You poor boy! I can imagine—it must be awful."

"But she does believe that I didn't know, doesn't she?" he asked, brokenly.

"Oh, yes! We all believe that. I've seen not a few cases of the same sort. The negative test is not by any means infallible; and with the knowledge that we have to-day of the incurability of many of the dreadful brain forms of

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the disease, every good physician now warns his patients of the possible consequences to everyone who has once contracted it."

"I'm not blaming Bonner," he said, miserably. "I've no one but myself to blame—and I wish that I *could* die."

"I don't. I want you to live and make good."

"If I only could!—make it up to her somehow, and make her care for me just a little."

"I can only repeat, do something to make her proud of you. I've had a good deal of experience with life, and I've never seen any love worthy the name—the kind that lasts—which wasn't based on respect either for superior strength or superior endowments of some sort that arouse admiration. It was Hawkes' handsome face, his musical talent, and his cleverness that excited Mabel's admiration, until she met another man who possessed much more. May I talk to you as if you *were* my brother, Alfred?"

"Fire away! You may say anything you like."

"It's about your drinking. How do you suppose that any fastidious woman could help loathing it?"

"I know I've been a damn fool; but I can stop it. She told me that she loathed me before I did it, and then I didn't care."

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" You'll not find it as easy to stop as you think; and I don't believe that you *can* do it, unless you fill your time with something that really interests you. The thing that makes me feel hopeful for you is your ever-ready generosity and sympathy with trouble. I've known of some of the generous things you've done; which you've been much too successful in concealing from Mabel. The best side of you she's never taken the trouble to know, and until now, hasn't been interested in the things that would have developed it. It's because I feel sure that when you come into personal contact with the human element in these splendid philanthropic movements that are absorbing the attention of the best men and women of to-day, you'll be interested in spite of yourself. In this strike these women are fighting for a great principle—fighting so bravely and against such terrible odds. Public opinion is with them: all they need is to be able to hold out. Help them to do it, Alfred! Save them from the rock upon which you've met shipwreck. It's just the thing that will appeal to Mabel—and how could you show her more truly and beautifully the depth of your own grief and repentance? "

" By Jove, Marian, I'll do it! I wish you were in town to help me."

" I shall be, off and on—in fact," forming a sudden resolution, " I'm going back this

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week. Mabel doesn't need me any longer; Julie can do everything for her." Marian smiled. "Mabel sent Julie away, telling her that she couldn't afford to keep a maid; whereupon Mrs. Fanshawe engaged her as housemaid to 'look after Mrs. Lawrence's rooms.' I've been horribly unjust to Mrs. Fanshawe; she's got a heart of gold."

"She's a ripping friend," Alfred agreed. "But this rot of Mabel's refusing to take any money from me. It makes me wild to think of her having to go without things that she must need."

"What earthly thing does she need, now, that The Gables doesn't supply?—except drugs?" Marian smiled again. "Those I order for her from Fraser; whom she has completely forgotten to notify to make out the bill in her name. It still goes to you—as your agent could tell you."

"That's some small satisfaction," he sighed.

"This threat of self-support isn't bothering me a bit," Marian went on. "Mabel has about as much idea of what going without means as the heir to a throne. She never paid a bill in her life, that I know of. After Father died, Aunt Julia always paid them for her, and you spoiled her in the same way. Financial values mean about as much to her as they do to—Czar. It's an awful wrong to bring a girl up like that;

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and when she's well enough, I'd like her to learn what going without means."

"Well, I wouldn't! I can't bear to think of her needing things."

"Oh, you men! you men!" deplored the wise virgin. "Where women are concerned it's always a feast or a famine with you; and most of the silly, weak things either bully you for the first, or languish for you if it's the last. At any rate, you generally give me reason to be satisfied with my state of single blessedness."

"I don't wonder," Alfred agreed, meekly. "I don't know any man who would be half good enough for you."

"Don't! Alfred," with comic appeal.

"It's true."

"But *such* a bromide; and we plain women get so many of them—in place of proposals."

Her perfect simplicity, added to her amusement, deterred him from further fulsome platitudes; and they parted, agreeing to return to town by the same train.

XXVII

CLAIRE, having accepted an offer from the B. Quartette to play with them in London and Paris, had sailed for England early in May. School and girlhood friends, now social leaders in both capitals, had first enlisted her services for charitable purposes; but her success was so immediate that she was soon assisting hostesses to entertain their guests, on both sides of the Channel, at professional rates. Managers were offering her contracts for recitals for the following year; and so frequently was her name appearing in print, that the news of her successes crossed the Atlantic to bring cheer to those of her country's critics who had had the temerity to acclaim her as among the elect before Europe had placed upon her the stamp of its approval.

Her apprehensions in regard to John, he had dispelled before she sailed by showing an unchanged attitude, except in one particular: he had spent no more evenings at The Studios. When he went there, it was to take her out, either to the theater or for a spin in his car. Neither had he gone to the ship. His *bon voyage* had been a box of flowers and Maeter-

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linck's *Mary Magdalena*. One letter she had had from him since, making her heart sing with its generous, if belated, praise of her achievements.

Hawkes, reading of them over a late breakfast at the Metropolitan Club one hot August morning, was attacked by a sudden longing for the Alps. Beside his plate lay a post card from Claire, stating that she was leaving Paris for a month or six weeks in the Tirol. Two weeks later he was chatting with her on the terrace of the Hotel Miramonti at Cortina, amidst a heterogeneous group of people sipping their afternoon coffee or tea according to the various nationalities represented, ranging from the swart, heavily built Armenians and Egyptians to the fairer-skinned and more slender visitors from England and America. The daily influx of motor cars had begun from Toblach, Venice, or Pieve di Cadore—that fitting birthplace of a supremely great artist; which, when first its marvelous perspective of castellated peaks bursts upon one's view, fills one with wonder not that so great an artist as Titian sprang from so primitive a place, but that any who have lived in daily communion with its grandeur could be aught else.

A group of young people coming up from the tennis court, where a tournament was in progress, were glibly conversing in bad French.

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"Who dares affirm that Paris is not the center of the universe?" said Hawkes. "And we talk of English becoming the universal language. That dream has been defeated by the French governess and the French *couturier*. There's not a child in this hotel who hasn't the first, I'll wager, nor a mamma who isn't done—in every sense of the word—by the last. Look at that flawlessly attired woman near the steps—the fat one."

"Her gowns are exquisite," agreed Claire; "but they don't seem to make her happy. I've watched her for two weeks, and not once have I seen that glum mask break into a smile."

"It's her corsets," laughed Hawkes. "The Armenian waist, on its native heath, goes unconfined, and naturally resents French control."

"Sensible waist," approved Claire. "But what do you say to a walk?"

"I was but waiting for you to suggest it."

"You won't mind waiting while I change?—It gets so much cooler after five."

"My time is yours, fair lady. Have I not come four thousand miles, more or less, to place it, myself, and——"

"Wait for me in the glass corridor, by the door leading into the woods," she interrupted him.

"Just outside," he replied. Here he greeted her some fifteen minutes later. "*Hochwohlge-*

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borene Fürstin Lenore. You look a true daughter of these mountains. It's very chic and most becoming."

Her costume was of green cloth, the short skirt displaying well-made tan boots, of the same shade as the leather collar and cuffs of the perfectly fitting Norfolk jacket.

"Not guilty," she protested. "It is *aus Wien*; but note that there are no feathers," pointing to the Tirolese hat of green velour that framed her black hair. "I'm a good Audubonner, and you can't make one of an Austrian. Even you English are mighty slow at it,—with your abominable slaughter of foxes and pheasants."

"How about the large majority of American women?" he parried. "Is killing for sport any worse than for mere adornment?"

"Not a bit," she disarmed him: "they're both equally uncivilized. You men are far ahead of us where it comes to clothes. I'm well aware that the modern woman's string of pearls satisfies the same instinct as the savage's beads. But the men are mostly to blame for it. You like to see her decked out like a Salome. The more beads and less clothes she has on, the more she attracts you. And has not that been her chief business in life, that one of you might stoop to choose her, and she should not be left to wither on the vine?"

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"Chivalry demands that I deny the allegation."

"It's true, none the less. But the development of woman's gray matter is going to change that. Some day she will have acquired the mental and moral stature to say to men: we, as the mothers and guardians of the race, claim that ours is the right of choice, and, unless you please us by the higher, the mental and moral graces, you shall not be our mates and the fathers of our children. And that day is coming rapidly."

"I should say that it had come," he replied, his eyes upon her face, "judging by the way the best of you manage to get on without us."

"Look!" Claire exclaimed, as the path by which they had been steadily climbing brought them suddenly out upon a ledge of rock.

The rays of the lowering sun slanted across the green Ampezzo Valley, cut by its tumbling river and dotted by its hundreds of little chalets. Monte Cristallo was turning to a dull red, and lovely, snow-capped Antelao to a rose mauve. Away to the south stretched the misty, turreted peaks, in those weirdly fantastic shapes that give to the Dolomites their peculiar charm.

"They look like so many Valhallas, don't they?" she asked, dreamily. "When I get up here I'm always disappointed not to see

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Walküren whisking across the sky. Let's sit down."

She chose the trunk of a larch for a back, and he stretched out at her feet with a long sign of content, saying, "*J'y suis; j'y reste.*"

"That's the way getting back to the Alps always makes me feel, too,—when it doesn't rain. And now tell me more about home. Marian is the most unsatisfactory correspondent; I haven't had a line from her for a month—nor seen an American paper since I left Paris."

"Then you haven't heard how Lawrence has been distinguishing himself."

"Marian wrote me that he was taking an interest in the garment workers' strike."

"That's putting it inadequately. He practically is the strike, now. When he began his investigations, he found that the manufacturers had not carried out their promises made to the women when they went back to work; and the more he learned of the conditions, the madder he got. Finally, he made the amazing proposition to the girls' union to finance a second strike. Needless to say, they walked out again within the week. Of course the manufacturers were enraged: it has even been suggested that the two thugs, by whom he was attacked one night, were hired by one or several of them. Men mean enough to force girls who work for twelve and thirteen hours a day, for five and

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six dollars a week, to pay for their thread, needles, and the use of the machines that these manufacturers own, would be capable of almost anything."

"It's unspeakable! Was Alfred hurt?"

"Not much, only bruised. His fencing skill stood him in good stead; and, marvelous to relate, two policemen happened to be just around the corner, and appeared upon the scene in answer to the screams of a woman who emerged, opportunely, from a near-by house. But they were too late to catch the thugs, who took to their heels and escaped. Lawrence now goes about the city attended by two Secret Service men. Big headlines, each morning and evening, announce the doings of the millionaire protector of enslaved womanhood. He is the hero of the hour."

"Good for Alfred! Who would ever have thought that he had it in him? What uncertain quantities most of us are."

"You and he have certainly jumped into the limelight with astounding celerity. And have you found it splendidly worth while?"

"Sometimes, and at others strangely unsatisfying. It's awfully tiring—one has to fly about so. Fashionable functions are never very satisfying, do you think? And it's mostly at those that I've been playing. But I've signed some contracts for recitals in the autumn. I

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go to Vienna in October. That will be my Waterloo! ”

“ And you’re not going home? ”

“ Oh, yes, after Christmas—perhaps before. I may be half an alien, but New York is home, after all.—Tell me, how does Mabel take this change in Alfred? ”

“ I think that it bewilders her. She has always looked upon him as such a nonentity. She certainly reads of his valiant deeds with interest—although Doctor Rathbone has put all of our noses out of joint. Might I ask how that man exerts the hypnotic influence over the feminine mind that he unquestionably does? I am curious to know the secret of his power. Being a woman, perhaps you can tell me.”

“ Hypnotic nonsense! He’s just big, strong, able, and helpful. He’s a brilliant surgeon, and does an enormous amount of good.”

“ Besides being an extremely attractive man,” Hawkes added, tentatively.

“ That wouldn’t make any difference, if he didn’t do something with it.”

“ It is the doing that counts with you, is it? ”

“ Of course! As he says, action is our only reason for being. The truth of this I’ve been learning myself only within the past year.”

“ And does action, alone, satisfy your heart? ”

“ I wonder does anything do that,” she

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mused. "They're queer, contrary, insatiable things—hearts. And perhaps they don't deserve to be satisfied, because they never seem really to know what they want. They think they want a thing terribly, but when they get it, it's something else they're longing for."

"Perhaps," he suggested, "it's the instinct of perfection, always latent in the subconscious mind, that refuses to be satisfied with the imperfect thing that almost all human experience is. Hasn't man been cursing Goethe ever since he made his apotheosis of it in his *Ewigweibliche*, and sent us vainly seeking it in the heart of evasive, incomprehensible woman?"

"Nor did Faust find it till he sought it in Marguerite's soul. And he never discovered that she had one until he was stricken blind. It is the eyeless Fausts that we modern women are seeking—the men who recognize the bead woman for the courtesan that she is, and the 'womanly woman,' whose pin-head intellect doesn't enable her to see beyond the narrow limits of *my* home, *my* husband, and *my* children, as the spineless, uneducated egoist that *she* is, either completely ignorant of, or totally indifferent to, the manly tyrannies and brutalities that are sending other women's children to sweat-shop slavery, or worse. One thing that I want to go home for is to join the unwomanly women in their struggle for better government

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and better conditions for the women and children of all classes."

He raised himself on his elbow, to see her the better. "I would I could care as you do. Wherever do you find the incentive?"

"Everywhere. It's in the air—the *Zeitgeist*; the newly awakened consciousness that, for the first time, we are creating. For women the future teems with magnificent, immeasurable opportunity." With sibyl's eyes she looked beyond the man, away to the filmy clouds and the misty peaks; but the man looked only at her. When she had finished, he took it up.

"Still the *Ewigweibliche* leading us on and up."

"No," she answered, sadly; "but the knowledge that we led you nowhere but just where you wanted to go. We're coming to see that our centuries of repression and self-sacrifice have been a pitiful waste. One can only lift one's self, and that, only through developing all one's faculties and all one's strength. Look at Antelao, the highest and most beautiful of them all, how it stands apart from all the rest. How complete it is, how still, how pure! Do you know the old Swiss legend, 'High on the Alps there is no sin'? The purest and the strongest always stand alone."

An answering sadness shone in his eyes. "You are very beautiful, Lenore; and you

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make me feel very lonely." Rising to his feet, he offered her his hand to help her up. "Are you aware that the sun has gone down, and that we shall find ourselves stumbling through the woods in the dark unless we go? As it is, we shall be late for dinner."

"No, we shan't. There's a shorter way back than the one we came. We must go straight down, by the path just below, and back by the road. I always avoid it, if possible, at this time, as the cars leaving late from Venice are due, and deluge one with dust."

Which last assertion proved too true. After having stopped and ducked a dozen or more times to escape blindness or suffocation, they looked up to see the last engine of their discomfort at a standstill a short distance ahead, and the man at the wheel, whose face was almost concealed beneath an aeronaut's cap, goggles, and many layers of dust, beckoning to them. They started towards him, when suddenly the piratical countenance showed a gleam of white teeth, a jolly laugh rang out, and Claire exclaimed: "Uncle Stive!"

XXVIII

DURING the three years that Claire had spent at school in Paris, her uncle had rarely failed to send for her of a Sunday to partake of *déjeuner* with him in his apartment on the *Avenue de l'Alma*. This much Stuyvesant Raymond had felt that he owed his brother's orphaned child, and thus heroically set out to meet a painful necessity. But so vulnerable was this confirmed woman-hater, through half a lifetime of abstention from feminine society, that, in a pathetically short time, the dreaded sabbatical obligation came to be an eagerly anticipated event. Through sheer fear and ignorance of her sex he had begun by treating her every whim with a deferential courtesy as novel as it was demoralizing to her sixteen years of inexperience. To his ever-growing enjoyment the imperious, impulsive girl had queened it over him one moment, and poured torrential accounts of school feuds into his attentive ear the next. So serious a one had arisen in the third year of her sojourn, that she plead to be allowed to join one of her schoolmates—an English girl, now a duchess—who was leaving for Dresden to complete her education. An inter-

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view with the school's music master, an Alsatian of German parentage, who spoke in unmeasured terms of Claire's talent and advised Germany's more inspiring musical atmosphere for its development, resulted in her departure for the Saxon capital. Of the emptiness that she left behind her in the heart of the shy, lonely man, whose reserve had completely concealed his need of and affection for her, she never dreamed. Subsequently, and up to the time that she became her own mistress, a perfunctory weekly letter had been her acknowledgment of his rights as guardian and what she thought his generous acceptance of a troublesome responsibility. To this same generosity she attributed his picking her up in his car each summer for a fortnight's run over the beautiful and, to the long-suffering motorist, maddeningly regulated roads of Switzerland. Always before he had notified her of his coming; this time he thought to give her a surprise, and got a most uncomfortable one himself. The Bohemian mode of life adopted by her since she came of age and into her modest fortune, had never met with his approval. To find her stopping, unchaperoned, in a large hotel with a male creature who had crossed Europe to visit her, not only offended his prejudices, but thoroughly alarmed him. Having learned the futility of commenting upon her actions, he



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chose the safest solution, for the moment, and asked both to join him for an extended tour. Claire's ready acceptance allayed the fears that a week's close observation entirely dispelled; her nothing more than friendship being too evident for even a fond and fearful relative to mistake for a warmer and more dangerous emotion. This left him free to enjoy them both; for to men, as well as to women, Brooke Hawkes could be a charming companion. And so wisely did he set about charming his kindly host of the road, that that old-fashioned gentleman, with a very keen regret for the dwindling perspective of a most desirable nephew, found himself asking whatever did these modern girls want, that this perverse niece of his refused to consider so delightful and handsome a man in the light of a possible husband. To be told that one might elect to go through life husbandless would have left him questioning her sanity, although it might be for the identical reasons that left many a man a bachelor.

Bidding farewell to Cortina, their first day's run was over the Falzarrego and Pordoi Joch; bringing into Bozen at sundown a party so depleted of expletives that there were none left for the flaming hues on the Rosengarten. From Trafoi they climbed the dizzy, zigzag Stelvio, and from Tirano turned south to Como. Claire often left the two men in the tonneau for the

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seat beside the chauffeur, whom she urged to all the mad risks dear to his accelerative kind. "It makes one feel so like a bird to go swooping down from the heights," she threw over her shoulder as the car coasted a steep and circuitous bit of road; her ardor being quenched for the moment by the reply that she was likely to feel more like a corpse unless the brakes were put on at once. Which admonition the driver acted upon, and none too soon; for, at a sharp turn not a dozen yards ahead, in suddenly swerving to avoid an ascending car, their outer wheel skidded to within a few inches of the edge of the road, where a sheer drop of a hundred feet offered ample opportunity for testing post-mortem sensations.

At Cadenabbia and Lugano they encountered friends, and lingered for a week on the shores of those two most lovable of Italy's emerald lakes; thrilling the more to their gentle lure in having descended upon them from the glacial wastes and frowning crags of the Ortlers—awe-inspiring, almost repellent, in their desolate immensity and loneliness. Their next flights were over the St. Gothard and Brunig to quaint, immaculate little Thun; in restful contrast to Lucerne's overdressed crowds, and Interlaken's alpenstocked fanatics agape for the Jungfrau. The quiet charm of the Thuner Hof, set in its beautiful spacious garden, and the many places

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of interest within a short distance, kept them on from day to day. Hawkes vowed to return for an entire summer, if only for the pleasure of dining on the veranda and watching the changing lights on the snowy pyramid of the Blumesalp, framed by the trees that fringed the shores of the river; that delicious volume of water, glacier fed, blue, swift, deep; cooling the garden even at midday, as it rushed by to its foamy dash through the piers of the old covered bridge that led to the wooded park on the opposite shore. An excellent orchestra at the Kursaal, a stone's throw back from the hotel, generally claimed Uncle Stive for the evening; Hawkes and Claire preferring a sheltered corner at the end of the garden, where the music reached them softened by distance and the roar of the river.

As the rising moon tipped the white summit of the Blumesalp, Hawkes apostrophized: "O radiant Queen of the Bernese Oberland! thou art as coldly, unresponsively beautiful as—my Lady of Dreams."

The orchestra began the *Waldweben* from *Siegfried*, and Claire exclaimed: "The accompaniment of all others for the song of the river, isn't it?"

"It seems almost too perfect to be real," he replied. "Not an ugly or discordant note in

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the whole wonderful scene. What a setting for an opera! "

" And the *dramatis personæ*? " she questioned.

" You and I; why not? "

" Oh, we're too placidly contented to be dramatic."

" Are we? "

" I am."

" And has it never occurred to you, Lenore, that your placidity might be a menace to mine? "

" Please be placid, too," she begged. " Don't supply the discordant note. It's all so exquisitely restful; and I need the rest, of this and of friendship—just friendship," she added, fearfully.

After a slight pause, he said: " It shall be as you wish."

She noted the even tones of his voice, but her eyes did not see the taut muscles of his face quiver as the Sieglinde love motive sobbed along the strings of the 'cellos. To drown it she rushed off at a tangent.

" Tell me more about your brother. A socialist with a title is such an interesting anomaly."

" He has little love for it, I assure you," he followed her lead, in the same measured tones: " and his distaste for all classifications would

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make him like ' socialist ' as little. He refuses to be limited by any creed, Christian or Karl-Marxian. A disciple of the latter once taxed him with having no formulated theory of the distribution of capital. His answer was, ' The theory upon which I am trying to dispose of mine is justice, and I propose to do it according to my own thinking and not that of a man who has been dead for thirty years.' "

" I like that," she approved.

" Oh, you and he would hit it off in many of your ideas. He declares that, if for no other reason, he owes it to me to get rid of all his property before he dies, as by that time I shall probably have gone through all my own and be forced to go to work. He is much older than I, you know. We had different mothers."

" Will he never marry? "

" He's a cripple."

" Oh! " she said, helplessly sympathetic; wondering why he had not told her this before.

" He had worn-out stock on both sides, poor old chap!—hadn't a chance. Is it any wonder that caste seems a horrible mockery to him? My French *bourgeoise* mother saved me—and our fallen fortunes."

" And yet, with a strange inconsistency, he is the worker," she reflected.

" I don't admit the inconsistency. There are but four real incentives to work—poverty,

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genius, love, and suffering. My unfortunate brother has suffered horribly. Life stung him to action."

"While it has made drifting so pleasant to you that you—drift."

"That, with the rest of my class," he corrected, "I have sought amusement to banish dull care and forget the fourth estate. Action *per se* has gone to the heads of you modern women. With Jane Fanshawe—your cousin Miss Leighton, it's an obsession. It's so new a thing to you that you vastly over-estimate it. You forget that the activity of one-half the world is directed towards undoing the pernicious, or mistaken, activity of the other half. Even your electric Emerson tells us that we are here not to act but to be acted upon."

"You have read so much more than I have that you can always refute me with facts," she chafed. "But I know you're wrong."

"Irish and delightfully feminine," he put her to rout; but she returned to the attack.

"You go at everything too much with your head; you're always scoffing; you don't feel things enough."

"Perhaps, long ago, before I had lost the capacity to feel, I, too, may have worshiped at the shrine of your goddess Action; believed that great deeds must carry conviction, superiority win love, and generosity and justice turn men

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from lying and cheating. But when I learned that among the fools and knaves that pass as mankind, justice was impossible to administer because generosity is abused, superiority hated, and greatness feared——” He broke off to assume a lighter tone. “*Que voulez-vous?* One turns to the philosophy which teaches one to make the best of a difficult situation. To attempt to reform this incorrigible old world is to overwork your thyroid gland and ruin your disposition, as it did Hamlet’s, and all to no purpose. Shall I tell you the effect it had upon a friend of mine?”

“Yes, do.”

“We were at school together, he and I, and went up to Oxford at the same time. When he came up to Eton he was wretchedly equipped to cope with the remorseless brutality of young Britain in knickers. Cursed with a love of beauty that shrank from all ugliness, he was as sensitive as a girl. A harsh word, even a discordant sound, was torture to him. One day a fox was run to cover in our cricket field, to the delight of all true lovers of fair sport present, except my friend; who, when the wretched little brute was driven out to fight—one against a pack that made short work of it—burst into tears and ran from the field. You can fancy the ragging to which he was thereafter subjected. Whatever its bad results, it taught him to con-

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trol his feelings, by concealing them. This made him keep everyone at arm's length; a course that became habitual to him. At Oxford he came under the influence of a group of intellectuals who called themselves The Sceptics. A droll lot they were—none over twenty-one, yet convinced that there were no more things in heaven and earth than those dreamt of in their philosophy: a *credo* consisting, for the most part, of witty abstractions paraphrased from Horace, Aristophanes, Montaigne, Voltaire, Gautier, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Stirner. With them they charged the windmills of Philistia, and made colossal young asses of themselves generally. Not altogether a bad initiation for the diplomatic service, however, which after a year's travel he entered. His first post was Paris. You doubtless know that an attaché's duties are largely social—that women can make those duties extremely pleasant and themselves very dangerous to young men with a weakness for beauty. A superb animal, one of the fashionable Messalinas of this Paris season, had grown weary of her lover and wanted him got rid of. My friend was by way of being a good fencer, and she selected him as her instrument. Let me tell you that he was not her lover; but she managed to convince the man who was that he had cause for jealousy. A duel was the result, and my friend

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was recalled. Through family influence he was transferred to Petersburg, where the Paris experience practically repeated itself. In neither case had he been really to blame, and he returned to England embittered by the injustice of man and the falseness of woman. In London he fell in with some of the Fabians, who discoursed so eloquently of the wrongs of the fourth estate that he was caught. Their need seemed cruelly exigent; there were mountains to lift and so few making any effort to lift them. In spite of an almost overmastering loathing of the squalid, brutal ugliness of what we term 'life' in London's slums, he went to live in them, and worked as he hadn't known that he could work: until he saw that those whom he was straining every nerve to help would not help themselves—their spirit broken, their bodies sodden with drink, they could not be saved. Soul-sick with the horror and hopelessness of it all, he buried himself in an isolated place in the country, where, for two years, he lived with no companions, other than the servants, but his horse and his dog; finding them infinitely kinder and gentler than men, whom they serve as men will not serve one another. A family obligation brought him back to the world, to the life of his own class. Expecting nothing, hoping nothing, he drugged his thoughts with travel, the society of women—

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and the rest. And then something happened. He looked into a pair of deep, wonderful eyes, one moment flashing with the fire of inspiration that the next changed to little dancing flames of Elfland; these, in turn, quenched by tears of pity for another's pain. Elf, siren, sibyl, saint, and martyr—all peeped out from them to reveal a woman's soul, strong, sweet, and fearless. And he knew it for the will-o'-the-wisp that he had been following all his life, hoping to find it behind each lovely face that smiled upon him. Some of these women he had thought he loved, but now he knew that it wasn't love; for it hadn't changed his life. Those eyes changed everything. The soul that shone out of them revealed to him his weakness and his loneliness as nothing had ever shown them to him before; and he wanted this woman for his wife as he had never wanted anything else."

He stopped, and there followed a tense, painful silence. Dumb with dread, Claire found herself stupidly listening to the river, which seemed to be saying: "Hurry, hurry, hurry; there's no time to be lost, I have so far to go." She held her breath as he began to speak again.

"But she didn't love him;—so he did the only thing that he could do, he——"

"Are you two going to stay up all night?" came the reproving tones of an annoyed uncle from the path behind them. "If we're going

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up the Jungfrau to-morrow, we'll have to make an early start."

The following morning, instead of being on the way to Lauterbrunnen, Claire was sitting in a far nook of the garden, where her uncle came upon her and, to his dismay, found her in tears.

"You do care for him, then?" he said, anxiously. "He told me last night that he was going because you didn't."

Unable to command her voice, she held out the letter that was lying on her lap. He took it and read:

DEAR LENORE:

My brother is ill, and has written me that he needs me. I leave on an early train, before you are up. It is as well, for good-bys are painful things. Forget the story that I told you last night—or, if you think of it, try and believe that the man of whom I told you must be the better for having loved—what he can never forget, and will always think of as the most beautiful experience of his life.

Faithfully,
BROOKE HAWKES.

Her uncle handed her back the letter, saying, "Then, if you don't care, why——" He was unable to see it further.

She controlled her voice with an effort. "It's because *he* cares; because I didn't know it; because I thought that he was only amusing himself; because, not knowing it, I've been very cruel to him—and I am fond of him—not the way he is of me: I don't want to marry him,

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but I do want him for a friend. Oh, why is everyone loving somebody who doesn't love them," her emotion getting the better of her grammar, "and having to hurt those who love one most? Everything seems to have pain in it; nobody's safe. The only safe thing is work; that doesn't go back on one or love one too much. And poor Hawkes hasn't got even that comfort." She began to cry again.

"Please don't, Claire," her uncle begged, distressfully. "It isn't your fault: you made it plain enough that you didn't love him. And what he says in that letter is true—real love does make everyone better. What you need now is to get away from here. We'll go on to Berne, and from there—anywhere you please."

"Thank you, Uncle Stive: you're a great help. If you're sure you're ready to go, I'd like nothing better; and, if you don't mind, I'd like to go back to Paris and get to work."

"Paris always sounds good to me, my dear." He rose. "Come along; the sooner we get off the better."

XXIX

Mrs. MILLS was hurrying through the lower hall of the Rathbone Sanatorium one cold, gray afternoon late in November, when the front door opened to admit a woman, who, passing the attendant, called to her.

" Say, Mrs. Mills, can I speak to you for a minute? "

Mrs. Mills turned towards her. " Certainly. What can I do for you? "

" Don't recognize me, do you? It's Luigia—and I suppose you don't want to; but—for God's sake, Mrs. Mills, let me see you for a few minutes! "

Her pallor and wretchedness were so apparent that Mrs. Mills' kind heart melted and she held out her hand, saying, " Come up to my room, I'm not very busy just now." As she started towards the stairs, Luigia asked:

" Elevator workin'? "

" Yes."

" Perhaps you wouldn't mind my usin' it. Rotten heart," she added, in explanation.

" I'm sorry to hear that," Mrs. Mills sympathized, as the elevator carried them to the

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floor above. "It seems, then, that it's high time that you looked us up."

"Some place you've got here," Luigia deflected the current from herself. "Always thought you'd get into the game, Mrs. Mills. Remember how the doctor always used to tell you you were a born nurse, whenever you came into the office to help him?"

"He has always overestimated my abilities in every direction. But here I am, so if I wasn't born to it, like Topsy, I must have 'growed' to it."

"And how's the kiddie?" Luigia questioned further, as Mrs. Mills put her into her most comfortable chair.

"Look for yourself," and Mrs. Mills handed her a silver frame, from which looked the frank, merry eyes of a tall, handsome girl of sixteen. "She's bigger than I am, and going to college next year. Just now she's away at school."

"She's a queen, all right. Makes me feel like I'd come out o' the ark to see her grown like that." Her eyes grew hungry. "Makes life worth livin' to have somethin' like that comin' home to you, don't it?"

"She's a great comfort," admitted the smiling mother. "And now I want to talk about you. I want to know how you managed to hide yourself so that none of us could find any traces of you. Your brother kept up the search for

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two years, and then we thought that you must be dead."

"Suppose I might as well get it off my chest, first as last." Her eyes turned from Mrs. Mills' as she continued: "I'm respectable now, but I didn't quit—the other, until I had to. When the doctor chucked me—say, Mrs. Mills," and she met her eyes again, "you know I never took that money, don't you?"

"Yes, I always felt sure that you didn't."

"How did you know, I wonder, when he didn't?"

"Because I knew how much you cared for him."

"I'd have let him walk over me. I cared for him like a dog—until that night last winter, when he treated me like one. Then I just went mad. You can't think any worse o' me for the dirty trick I've played him than I do myself. I sent that letter to old Lane the same night—and the next day I'd 'ave gone to hell to get it back. I've never had a minute's peace since. Don't think I could 'ave stood it—always thinkin' what it lost him, if I hadn't got Peachy Lawrence to cough up some of his dough for another hospital. When I've croacked, you'll tell him I made good on that, won't you?"

"I'll tell him before that, Luigia; and is it really so bad—the heart?"

"Guess it's angina—though the doctor won't

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say so. Pains awful when the attacks come. Oh, I know I'm all in; and I'm not cryin' over it, either. Life hasn't been any bed o' roses for me, Mrs. Mills; and when you're sick as I am, and got to live with a lot o' muck-rakin' backstairs Swedes and Irish, that treat you like dirt because you—but what's the use! they're not worth fussin' about. My old lady's dead white. She gives me a room to myself where I'm let alone, and lets me lay off when I can't work. Sends her doctor to see me, too."

"Who is your old lady, Luigia?—if you don't mind telling me."

"Sure don't. It's Mrs. James Fanshawe: and when the're more like her there won't be as many like me. If my sister-in-law had been her and your kind o' good, I'd never 'ave sloped. She was so damned saintly, she'd forgive me fifty times a day. The finger that hadn't a weddin'-ring on it was all she saw. If the doctor hadn't taken me, I'd 'ave gone again."

"But your brother is a good man, Luigia, and he cared for you."

"Suppose he did; but he never had time to show it. Oh, yes, he's good, all right. Don't believe he could sin if he tried: and if he ever saw a joke, I wasn't round when it happened. From mornin' till night it was nothin' but 'do your duty.' You couldn't breathe—it smothered you."

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"Poor child! You were starving for a little joy. But tell me how you managed to make Mr. Lawrence 'give up his dough,' as you express it."

"Oh, Peachy and I are old pals—knew him before he got married. So, when I heard that slick article of a wife o' his tell Mrs. Fanshawe she wished she had some plunks to slip the doctor for a hospital, you can take it from me, I didn't lose any time in handin' him the tip. It was when she was standin' on her dignity, and lettin' Mrs. F. support her. I knew it was pretty near his only chance of standin' in with her again; and, as he's plumb crazy about her, he was sure to tumble to it. Lord, what yaps men are to fuss about a woman like that. If her ways o' gettin' men are much more decent than mine—well, search me! Women like her, that tank men up at dinner, and then go turkeyin' with 'em with only enough o' their thousand dollar rags on to keep out the police—they send 'em to us faster 'an we can handle 'em, many a night. But we get all the blame. You know that picture o' St. Sebastian, Mrs. Mills,—the one all stuck full o' arrows? Well, that's kind o' like us—without the halo. We don't only get all the arrows that's comin' to us, but all that ought to go to your Mrs. Alfred Irving Lawrences, too."

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" I think she's got her share, Luigia. I doubt if she'll ever be a strong woman again."

" Oh, of course! *she* gets the halo. Didn't sell herself same as we do? Nit, she did it in church, and took her pay afterwards—in diamonds. If that's what you call bein' virtuous—none for mine, thanks. We're honest about it, anyhow. Tell you one thing, Mrs. Mills, no kid ever fell—excuse *me*, Willie slips. Whatever you want to call it, he never did it, first time, in my joint. Used to run a flat with a woman pal, and she felt same way as I did about it. What I learned in the doctor's office set me wise to a lot o' things that most people don't know. So, when they came to us green, we sent 'em home, unless they had too much of a load—then we let 'em sleep it off. And perhaps it wasn't good business. Lord! g. p.s weren't in it with some of 'em. One rich old guy—father's darling must have 'fessed—slipped us ten for savin' his son from ' Beelzebub,' and said he'd send ten more if we'd ' turn from our lives of shame and seek salvation in the arms of the church.' Wouldn't that jar you? It jarred Nell, all right. The old stiff made his pile on rotten canned meats. She told him he needn't worry and get wrinkles on our account; that we'd see him later in hell, as twenty wouldn't take us by the Twentieth Century Limited from little old Broadway to heaven—and we always

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traveled first class. Poor old Nell!—she was always game.”

“ Did she die? ” asked Mrs. Mills.

“ No; doin’ time over on the Island—’cause she wouldn’t hand out one day when a new guy on our beat got lofty and started in to insult her. Say, haven’t we got a sweet lot o’ police? ”

“ But, Luigia, I can’t understand your taking to that life. That first man—you loved him, and, except when that fiery temper of yours got the upper hand, you were a good girl.”

“ For God’s sake, Mrs. Mills, don’t *you* take to preachin’! Don’t think I could stand it to-day. Seein’ you and the nurses again—just bein’ here’s made me mushy—and——” She stopped, and put her hand over her quivering lips.

“ I didn’t mean to preach. The thought that was uppermost in my mind was how such a life could have appealed to a girl like you—it takes so much, and gives so little. You surely didn’t go into it without some good reason—without having tried other things first.”

“ No; first, I tried the river—but couldn’t work it; man jumped in after me. Next, I tried the Island—went into the river a woman, but came out a vagrant, see? Hadn’t any home, any money, or any job; so over the river instead of under it. On the level, Mrs. Mills,

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where's the right in men that never hustled for a dollar, always havin' enough of 'em to buy us, when we haven't enough cents to get a good meal and a decent roof over our heads? "

" You poor child! If you had only come to me before you left us that day."

" It wouldn't 'ave been any use; he wouldn't 'ave wanted me to stay. I didn't care about anything else—don't think I've ever cared much about anything since—except to hate things."

" Tell me what you did after you came back from the Island."

" What most the rest do, first time: tried for the job that jailbirds won't fit, ate in the bread line, and did the lungers cure o' sleepin' in the fresh air. Say, it's a joke. No one'll give you a decent job, and you get pinched for tryin' to die."

" It's too awful! too awful! "

" After that kind o' vacation," Luigia went on in the same dull, hopeless way, " just havin' good food and bein' warm makes you stand for the rest. Of course you hate it; but after a while it's all in the day's work, and—but what's the use o' talkin' about it? It's done, and so am I."

" The doctor's done so many wonderful things, Luigia, he might be able to help you. Let him look you over."

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"No! no! I couldn't!—I couldn't look him in the face. It's an easy guess he wouldn't want to see *me*, either."

"You're wrong there. He has never forgiven himself for that night last winter; for he saw that you were ill. I know that it will be a great relief to him to know that you are found, and that he will be only too glad if he can help you. He has told me more than once that he deserved it—losing the hospital—for having treated you as he did."

"God! . . . Why did you tell me? If he'd hated me for it, I could 'ave stood it—but— Say, we've got to get it back for him—somehow. That's what I came about—" the words came pantingly, "to see if you wouldn't go see old Lane—she wouldn't see me. You could tell her how it really was—I don't know—but it couldn't be bad—he couldn't be bad. . . . There must be some way—tell her I lied."

"He told her that you didn't."

"O God!" her breath was now coming in gasps. She struggled to her feet, and Mrs. Mills sprang forward, catching her as she swayed.

An hour later Rathbone stood over the writhing body. The bed on which it lay was drawn up to the open window, the head raised on a pile of pillows to ease the agonized breathing. Gradually the screams had ceased; the groans

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were growing feebler; the pulse throbbing more and more slowly.

"She's going," he said to the nurse standing beside him.

As if his voice had called her back from death, she opened her eyes and looked into his—a long, yearning look. She tried to speak, and he leaned over her. One word came in a whisper: "Forgive."

"Forgive me, Luigia," and he placed his hand gently on her forehead.

An ineffable smile transfigured her face for an instant, then the head fell to one side. The poor, tortured heart had ceased to beat.

"She's gone, Margaret," he announced to Mrs. Mills as he entered her room. "She was conscious just at the end—asked me to forgive her." His voice grew husky. "I'm going to have a damned sight harder time to forgive myself. I wonder how *you* gained your beautiful poise; you never lose it. *You* couldn't have treated a human being as I treated her—turned a woman, in her condition, out into the street on a night like that. She probably came to me for treatment, too."

"But you couldn't have saved her, John. And you know you never would have done it if it hadn't been for that mistake about the whiskey."

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"I'd like to think so; but I'm afraid it wasn't entirely due to that. There's a brute in most of us men, Margaret; and it's mighty hard to tame. Would she have died like that if it weren't so? God, what a wreck! She looks fifty, and she can't be much over thirty. Do you remember her superb health? And how pretty she was—always so merry, and willing, too. It was largely because I was so fond of the child that I couldn't forgive her for failing me."

"She never failed you, John. She has just told me that she cared for you like a dog, and has never cared much about anything since."

His face grew rigid. "Then I am responsible for it all. This is the second woman's life that I have ruined."

"You're not responsible—for either. Luigia ran away from you. If only she had come to me, it would all have been cleared up, somehow. The poor girl's passionate nature was her own undoing. Mosca and his wife never understood her: she needed petting and play. Theirs was the blame, if anyone's to blame. I'm not sure but what we're all just the slaves of our own natures."

"Which means our heredity. I wish that we might all have inherited your heavenly charity, Margaret." He rose heavily. "And now I



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must go and hunt up Mosca. It's going to be an awful blow to him, poor fellow."

She went with him to the door of the next room, in which the dead woman lay, and sighed as she watched him walk on down the hall with lagging step and bent head.

XXX

CLAIRE returned to New York the last week in January. Her ship had docked in the morning; the afternoon found her succumbing to tea in her studio once more, with Marian an attentive listener.

"Jinks, but it's good to be home again!" she exclaimed, giving Marian's ear an affectionate tweak as she took her cup from her; for, as of old, it was Marian who brewed.

"And what a changed mortal you are, Claire, from the you who came back to New York sixteen months ago."

"It's not the same person at all," and Claire smiled back at Marian's happy face. "This one's ten pounds heavier and over three thousand dollars richer."

"Have you really made that?"

"Of course I have. I'm now labeled *Made in Germany*, I'll have you to understand, and stamped with the approval of Vienna, Paris, and London. Are you duly proud to know me?"

"Overwhelmed by the honor," answered Marian, then a little wistfully, "People pay high for their pleasures, don't they?"

"You've put your finger on the fly in my

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ointment, Marian. But, before I tell you any more, I want to hear about everybody. The brief and infrequent scraps that you dignify by the name of letters tell mostly nothing. How's Mrs. Mills? "

" She's looking blooming—saw her yesterday, and she sent you her love. I suppose you know that Doctor Rathbone sent you those," pointing to a jar of Killarney roses. " They came just before I left this morning, and I took the liberty of opening them. His card slipped out of the envelope, so I couldn't help seeing it." Her eyes were mischievous. " You found it, didn't you? "

" Yes," answered Claire, refusing to meet those teasing eyes. " How is he?—I've not heard from him for weeks."

" He looks vigorous, and is doing the work of a dozen men, as usual. Mrs. Mills told me that a patient he operated on a short time ago is very ill in Florida, and that he may have to go down there any day."

Assuming a brave front of indifference as to this potential journey, Claire asked: " How's the hospital coming on? "

" It's almost up."

" Is Mabel as much interested in it as she was? "

" Alas, no."

" What's the matter? "

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"Everything. Her strength doesn't come back as it should. Things aren't much better between her and Alfred, either, and I'd so hoped that they were going to be. You never saw a more changed mortal than he is."

"I'm dying to hear how he induced her to go back to him."

"By promising to be a brother to her, and to give her absolute freedom. Poor boy, he's kept his bargain with rare courage and patience."

"I never believed she'd hold out," said Claire.

"She did try to do something; she tried hard to learn typing last summer from Mrs. Fanshawe's secretary; but she wasn't physically able to do any work."

"Nor probably ever will be—either physically or mentally. I fear you're a poor judge of character, Marian, where that all too pretty sister of yours is concerned. Your blindness even makes you misjudge her friends, notably Mrs. Fanshawe and Brooke Hawkes."

"I admit that I was mistaken about Mrs. Fanshawe, but I don't admit it about Hawkes. To give the devil his due, though, he was a gentleman; which is more than I can say for the present man that Mabel has in tow."

"Another! I thought it was the doctor."

"It was, until she saw that she was only a

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case to him. Alas, she *must* have excitement. She feels so wretched most of the time that she goes in for anything that will help her to forget it. Same old craving for overstimulation that is the result of an idle life—whether enforced or selected. Now don't say you've heard it before," she forestalled Claire's remonstrance, "as I'm also going to say that children would have saved her—and bromide, or no bromide, it's true, more's the pity! now that she can't have them."

With the unexpectedness characteristic of Claire, she replied, "I've thought you might be right about that, since seeing her with those children at Mrs. Fanshawe's last winter. It was the only time I ever saw her doing anything for anybody else and looking as if she liked it. I fancy it's as Hawkes says: that most of us have to be pushed into assuming responsibilities. But tell me, who's Mabel's latest?"

"He's an English colonial, from Cape Colony; immensely rich and, in a big, brutal way, handsome. The Blond Beast type—evidently used to riding over everything that he can't buy."

"A novelty, and difficult to subdue, probably," Claire suggested. "What brought him here?"

"He came over to try and get Mr. Fanshawe to go into some big business deal with him.

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I'm too hazy about it to give you the details. Wants him to do South Africa, probably, as he—Fanshawe—did us: but, *mirabile dictu*, James is turning virtuous. He's making a model town of his plant in Jersey."

"Will wonders never cease! But, after all, it's what they generally do when they have been exposed, or fear that they are going to be. Perhaps he also finds it less expensive than strikes."

"What a hopeless cynic you are, Claire. His wife thinks that he's really had a change of heart."

"I'm sure I hope he has, for her sake. What is she doing these days?"

"She's gone in madly for woman suffrage—taken to speaking; and she's been very successful at it, too. She's awfully funny about it—says that if she could only forget her grammar for more than two minutes at a time, she might become eloquent. As a matter of fact, she often is; and she feels so genuinely for the poor that what she says generally carries conviction. She bases her plea largely on their necessity, both from the standpoint of woman's underpaid labor and the social evil."

"I'll look her up to-morrow morning. I can hardly wait to begin! Now don't faint! I've come home to do something besides give concerts."

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“ Oh, you’re not going to give up your music! ”

“ Of course not. Didn’t I say *besides*? I’ve been learning a lot of things this summer, and one of them is, that about one-quarter of those in my audiences—always those who make the greatest demonstration—take their music as they do any other sensual pleasure—absinthe, tobacco, or love as Mabel plays with it. With only the musically educated is it an intellectual thing, or, with as limited a number, a spiritual thing. Just to play upon—to excite the emotions—it doesn’t satisfy me. Of course, the ovations I received in Vienna and Paris were a great joy—the recitals, I mean. But, I assure you, none of the times that I played in London gave me the keen satisfaction that playing for a lot of factory girls did. Those poor things, in their sordid lives of drudgery, were starving; and they drank in my music with their souls, not their senses. I’m going to teach, Marian; not the drawing-room doll, nor the rag-time schoolgirl, but the girl with talent. Most of it is probably down on the lower East Side. On the ship I saw a lot of a woman who is interested in the Music School Settlement. She tells me that there is such a lot of talent there; but that many of the pupils are too poor to develop it. What would you say to giving the satiated, neurasthenic rich their musical dope, during a

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part of the time, and with their money helping to make musicians and self-supporting citizens of the hungry emigrant? ”

Marian's eyes were wet as she answered: “ At any rate, I wasn't wrong about you, Claire. I *knew* that you would do something fine like this some day, but I didn't think it would be so soon.”

“ For goodness' sake, Marian, don't make a virtue of it! Like the rest of the world, I am looking for satisfaction, too. My mind has simply developed beyond believing that I can find it in the empty pleasure in which most people of our class continue to look for it. Through personal experience, I am beginning to grasp what you, Mrs. Mills, and Doctor Rathbone demonstrate in your lives—that conserving and creating the good is the only thing that does satisfy, in the long run. It all resolves itself down to a mere matter of intelligence. I've simply been stupid in not seeing it sooner. But don't think that I love my art any the less; on the contrary, I love it more—so much that I won't prostitute it.”

Marian smiled. “ That last sounds like Doctor Rathbone.”

“ Now that you mention it,” said Claire, laughing, “ it has a *timbre* that I seem to recall. And it also emphasizes my stupidity. He once suggested that I needed some Marcus Aurelius,

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which I then disdained as full of platitudes; whereupon he made me feel about an inch high by saying, 'I've noticed that irrefutable precepts are always platitudes until one has discovered their truth for one's self.' I've never known anyone who could make me feel as small as he does. I suppose it's because he's so big in every way."

"Another reason," said Marian, "is probably because he practices what he preaches. It is he who has kept Alfred going. After the strike was over he got him interested in the Probation Association, and from that to working on the problem of fitting the girls for earning their living after they are out from the jurisdiction of the courts. Mrs. Fanshawe's working with him; and James has promised her share of the funds for whatever scheme they ultimately decide upon. She told Alfred the other day that he'd better hurry about it, as James' period of penance was greatly endangered by the newspapers. They are already loud in their praises of his model-town undertaking."

"He'll be our first citizen in another year," said Claire, disgustedly. "Those gold-plated felons will never get their deserts until a woman is Attorney General and editors wear petticoats."

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"Perhaps our sex will have taken to trousers by that time," rejoined Marian.

"I wish they'd take to something—*anything* that they could walk in! I don't care much what it is, harem skirts or divided ones. Those that the women are wearing in Paris are worse than ever. And Paquin has been decorated with the Legion of Honor!"

"It isn't possible!"

"As true as that I refused to buy a skirt on the other side. Can't you see this in the encyclopedias of the year Three Thousand and One? 'The lost art of walking. The inhibitor of this unnecessary means of locomotion for women was decorated by the French government at the beginning of the twentieth century for this great service to the state.'"

"It's enough to make Napoleon turn in his grave. And you'd think that it would make women come to their senses, and realize how men work together to exploit their vanity and lack of brains for the sole purpose of relieving them of their money."

"Cheer up!" comforted Claire. "The 'bead' women and the 'sphere' women may be more vicious, or sillier, than ever, but the number of our intelligent and educated sisters grows larger every year."

"Of course they do. I know it perfectly well; but I've been having too much of bed caps



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and lotions with my last patients," Marian excused her falling from optimism.

"Which reminds me," said Claire, "that you haven't told me a thing about yourself. You're so selfless, Marian, that we all use you either as an outlet or a background."

"What nonsense! A nurse hasn't any life of her own. She shouldn't talk of sick-room doings, so, naturally, she has little to tell."

"I reiterate that you're the most selfless——"

Marian stopped her by throwing a cushion, so well aimed that it literally closed her mouth.

XXXI

"THERE'S no need of asking how you are," said Rathbone, as he held Claire's hand in both his own and scanned her face with eyes that made hers waver.

She drew her hand away and turned, ostensibly, to find a chair; but through force of habit, a beating heart, and a whirling brain, ended up on the window-seat.

"I'm disgusting with health," she forced herself to say, her voice betraying so little of her perturbation of mind that it gave her courage to chatter on. "You see, I've been acting upon all the advice you've given me, and growing strong by the week. I've gained ten pounds. Isn't that proof of the fact that I am also growing wings?"

"If you are, I don't see them," he replied, as he sat down in the chair nearest to her. "But if they are there, I'll wager they're stuck on with bad paste and may drop off at any moment. But, wings or horns, it's most gratifying to my professional esteem to be told that so blooming a—cure is mine."

"You're looking pretty fit yourself," she returned, "notwithstanding the fact that Mrs.

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Mills says you're trying to work yourself into another world."

"Dear old Margaret! She's had me killing myself for the past ten years. If there were anything in the absent-thought idea, she'd have done for me long since. As a matter of fact, I thrive on hard work. It's true that things have been a bit thick since I got back from Florida, else I'd have been in to see you sooner. And with you—has it been the same thing, good hard work, that has gained all those extra pounds? "

"You surely don't expect me to admit it, and give you the opportunity to say, I told you so."

"Of course not. That would be proof of the genuineness of the wings. But you can't deny that you're reveling in being a personage. Confess that it feels good to have arrived."

"I admit that I have acquired virtue in the eyes of the world by acquiring an economic value."

"Clever girl! It takes most of us a much longer time to discover that unpalatable fact. 'But that, too, will pass.' You won't mind it after a while."

"I think I'll always mind; for how can one ever know that one is liked for one's self, after one has arrived? "

"Hold to the friends who cheered your unenvied obscurity and entertained strong pre-

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sentiments that you were going to escape it. But is there no satisfying this greedy child!"

"It's not greediness." She turned to look out at the lights, nodding her head towards them. "It's down there, I think, the thing that will satisfy; down where the poor women are struggling for their food, their clothes, their honor, and their happiness—the women who haven't had my chances, who—— But you know it better than I, all the pitifulness of them. I went down to the Music School Settlement the day after I landed——" she assumed a lighter tone, "and I've got three young pupils whom I'm having a much harder time to keep from eating garlic than to make musicians of. Aside from their constant offense to my protesting nose, they are a perfect joy; so full of music that teaching them is just play."

"I knew it would come," he said, his voice taking on the vibrant quality to which she always thrilled, and now with a response so quick that she strangled it ere he had finished his next sentence: "But I didn't think it would come so soon."

"You and Marian have a mighty poor opinion of my learning capacity," she assumed reproach; "for she said exactly the same thing. But you, at least, won't attribute it to my wings." Not giving him time to reply, she hur-

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ried on: "You will understand it better. It's only what you have called it—'creating an immortality for good by the expression of one's genius; attaining the freedom to serve the god within.' And you must know, too, that having won that freedom one must keep it—at all costs."

"I don't quite follow you."

"I mean that one can't trust it to another—give another the power over one's life that might deprive one of it; not even if that person might give one great happiness. That is what you and Mrs. Mills—and also one other person—have taught me."

"I never taught you to refuse happiness," he denied. "I may have advised not seeking it; but surely we are entitled to every bit that comes to us—when not at the expense of another's, of course."

"But suppose it was at the expense of the most good that one could do?"

"But are you sure that it is the most good? Goodness is as Janus-faced as beauty—and often as deceptive."

"I no longer ask if it's beautiful," she returned, "only if it's essential. And that none can decide for another."

"That is true for you." He conceded it with a sigh. "The strong must do the bidding of their own hearts. And now tell me about your

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summer and all the laurels you've been winning."

After narrating the events that she thought would interest him most, she asked for news of the new hospital.

"I hope that we shall be in before the summer. Do you know that you have a very good fellow for a cousin-in-law? He has given me practically a free rein in construction and equipment; and we are going to have the best place of its kind that there is—exclusively for women and children, I mean."

"I'm so glad. Will it make up for the loss of the Lane endowment?" Seeing his brows knit, she exclaimed, impulsively, "Oh, I do hope that it will!"

"It will be a much smaller affair than that was to have been," he replied; "but quite enough to keep my hands full—with my own place."

"You'll keep that going, too?"

"Oh, yes, I must eat—or think that I must, and keep a car as well, to save my time."

"But will you get——" She stopped, apologizing for an impertinent question, which he insisted upon hearing. "I was going to ask you if you get nothing for all that you've done, and will do, for the hospital."

"Of course not. It's to be what all of our city hospitals should be, a free institution."

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"But, none the less, you're going to give more than half your time and skill there for nothing."

"What else do you suppose that thousands of us are doing every day in our clinics?—simply acting according to one of the best traditions of our profession."

"The other professions don't seem to be hampered by it, do they?"

"No, more's the pity!"

"And from what Marian tells me I should say that it was quite forgotten by the very large number of your profession who have replaced it by the grabbing tradition."

"I shall have to scold her," he smiled, "for disloyalty to her brother healers."

"Claire refused to be side-tracked. "But you can't do *all* the physician's work at the hospital."

"Why, of course not. We'll have the usual staff."

"And *they* will be paid."

"The endowment covers that."

"And you, alone, will receive nothing."

"A plague on the little nuisance! Haven't I told her why? We'll put a dunce's cap on her in a minute and stand her in the corner."

"I'm trying to make you admit that you give what you won't sell."

"In reality, what I like best to do: and what

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almost everybody, if financially independent, would prefer to do, if they would only give it a fair trial. Look at Lawrence. You couldn't stop him now; and Mrs. Fanshawe, in one of her delightfully profane moments, told me that he used to be one of the 'damn foolish loafers of his damnation hunting set.' Margaret has taken the greatest fancy to our buxom friend, and they've got their heads together over all sorts of utterly superfluous luxuries connected with the children's wards. Which reminds me—Margaret will take charge there, and I must find someone to replace her in Sixtieth Street. Do you think your cousin could be prevailed upon to take the position? "

"Marian?" gasped Claire, pierced by a sharp pang of jealousy, of which the next instant she felt ashamed to the verge of abasement.

"Miss Leighton, of course. Whom else could I mean? "

"I think it would be perfectly splendid for her," Claire strove for enthusiasm, "and that she will love it."

"She's got an excellent head on her shoulders, and knows her business from A to Z—besides being a very fine woman. I suppose she wrote you that she has been giving me a good deal of her time of late."

"Yes," answered Claire, still struggling

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with the green monster, which she sought to escape through still greater praise; "and she's all you say. She puts her whole heart and soul into her nursing in a way that is a constant reproach to any backslider like myself, who is always looking for satisfaction."

"Then you haven't found it?" he leaned forward, looking at her intently, and not waiting for her answer, continued earnestly: "Perhaps, after all, you are mistaken in thinking that you are one of the women who can put love and marriage out of her life and not suffer injury from it. Will you tell me who the other was who taught you to refuse what you termed great happiness?"

"Yes," she replied, again turning her face towards the window. "It was the man who spoiled love for me."

"I see." He pondered it during a brief pause. "But how can you know that another man—one who *really* loved you—could not show you that it was not spoiled; that it only seemed so to you because it had been shamefully desecrated?"

"I can't," she acknowledged. "I only know that it has made me feel that I am not fitted for marriage. Then, too, one can't serve two masters. Oh, I could *never* be happy without my music!"

"But marriage need not interfere with it."

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"Children would, though." She brought it out desperately. "Marian and I are alike in one thing: what we do, we *must* do with the whole of ourselves. We can't give piecemeal, a scrap here and a scrap there, making a real success of nothing. The more I loved my husband—or my children, the more they would take all the best of me; and my music would be always calling."

"And you think that you would be happy in neither?"

"Yes. Don't you see," she said it wistfully, "it's as if you—if you were married—had to take all the woman's responsibilities? You wouldn't have much time for your surgery in that case, would you?"

"That is true," he admitted.

"And could you conceive of its being for the best to give it up for marriage?"

"I see how it seems to you."

"But you don't feel with me. For the first time you fail to understand," her voice close to a sob.

"It isn't that, dear; I think I do understand. But haven't you guessed—don't you see that I want you too much to be able to be unprejudiced? But, however selfish I may seem to you, be sure that it's not enough to make me ask you to risk your new-found joy in living by giving yourself to me so long as you feel as

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you do. If you are convinced that it is for the best——” He paused, in the vain hope of contradiction, but she made no answer, and he continued: “ Well, we still have our friendship. And you will not be afraid of me, as you have been,” he asked, anxiously, “ if I tell you that I will guard you from myself as I would from anything that threatened your peace of mind or well-being? ”

“ I’m more afraid of myself, now, than of you. Oh, John, I can’t *help* loving you! You’ll have to protect me from myself, too; for if I saw that you suffered because of me, I might be weak enough to give in. But it would be as I’ve said—and then——”

He jumped up and strode to the other side of the room, then turned and came slowly back. She crouched against the cushions, unable to think of anything but that he was coming towards her. But he came no further than the chair he had left; dropping into it again, he said, his voice divinely gentle:

“ To know that you love me—care for me enough to make you weak—why, that alone, dear, must be a rock of strength to me and a perennial joy.”

“ How wonderful you are! ” she marveled. “ It won’t be pain with you. We can keep it—our friendship—unspoiled—and pure, can’t we? ”

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"Why not?"

"Oh, I never dreamed that a man could do it!—give to a woman like this."

"But you will give as much to me."

"That's the wonder of it—that you see it. Men think that only—the other thing is giving."

"Surely none could want it at such a price."

"They wouldn't see the price."

"Ah, I understand—your cruel experience. It—that hound has done you an irreparable injury! But I am going to hope that some day you will feel differently about trusting yourself to me."

She started to speak, but he anticipated her protest.

"You need not fear that I shall urge it. If you ever do change, you shall tell me of it yourself. Until then, I promise you, you shall hear no more of love from me."

"But if I can't change? Oh, you *mustn't* hope for it!"

"That I cannot promise you. But it won't make any difference—to you. Whether you marry me or not, little Claire, you will still be the dearest of my friends. And now I must go."

He stood beside her, raised her hand to his lips; and the next moment he was gone.

XXXII

ONE afternoon of the following week, Claire received a belated note from Marian, inclosing a card for a woman suffrage meeting. Rathbone's name, underlined as one of the speakers, caught her eye first, the date and the hour last. A glance at the clock sent her scurrying into hat and coat, and over to The Plaza. She slipped into a seat at the back of the ballroom at the same moment that John rose to address the chair, his deep voice carrying to every corner of the room.

“ Madam Chairman; Ladies.—Why you have honored me by asking me here to-day, instead of a lawyer, to talk to you upon the legal aspect of this question, of which I gave you the medical a year ago, I am at a loss to know. Perhaps it is because you labor under the time-honored prejudice against lawyers which attributes to them the elastic mental powers that the limerick does to the famous political economist. You may have heard it.—

‘ There was a philosopher, Mill,
When you said “ Twice two’s four,” he said “ Still,
Perhaps up in Heaven
It makes six or seven,”
This abnormal philosopher, Mill.’



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“ 'Tis unquestionably true that the statutes, as construed by the courts, seem often to possess an inherent inconsistency as to letter and spirit that is most hopelessly bewildering to the uninitiated. Then, to add confusion worse confounded, our public servants nullify the laws through not enforcing them, and from public platforms make the astonishing statements that there are no such laws. One or two of these legal, or illegal, vagaries I will now put before you.

“ A clause of our tenement house law states that a woman who commits prostitution in a tenement house shall be deemed a vagrant. If she commits prostitution in a house not a tenement, we are told that she is not a vagrant; although the *Code of Criminal Procedure* declares a common prostitute, who has no lawful employment whereby to maintain herself, to be a vagrant. The inmate of the regular house, who works at her death-dealing trade both day and night, has, perforce, no lawful employment; whereas the girl of the tenement, who solicits on the streets at night, often has a lawful employment, at which she works from eight in the morning until six in the evening for the still lawful impossible-to-live-on wage. We are told that this discrimination is made because the girl of the streets is a common nuisance and a menace to the nice young men of the community;

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who, this concept would seem to presuppose, have neither the gumption, self-respect, nor strength to withstand what every nice young woman is expected to, and unquestionably *would* reject with loathing, if she were approached by a man for a similar purpose. If the nice young man, even though he may have been the pride of his football team, cannot protect himself from the dangers of the streets that our modern girl can, why then, of the two, he it would seem, is the one most in need of a governess. Some of you might even be vindictive and unreasonable enough to say that he needed her not because he could not, but because he did not wish to protect himself; particularly if you had heard what I have been told—that he, the so-called nice young man, has been known to seek this temptation as the climax of his farewell bachelor dinner. A sort of post-prandial assertion of his divine right as a male to break every law of decency that he expects his fiancée to keep; for, before he does this damnable wrong to her, he first drinks himself into the state of bestiality that makes it possible.

“It is illegal under the New York Tenement House Law for a property owner to allow his house to be used for immoral purposes; but his responsibility can be so easily evaded that again it is only the woman who is punished for the crime that is a crime in a tenement house,

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where only one prostitute may live, but, we are told, is not a crime in a house, not a tenement, where nothing but prostitutes live; notwithstanding the fact that one of our court decisions relating to such houses, reads: 'Its direct tendency was to corrupt and deprave public morals and disturb the peace, and for this reason it was a common nuisance.' For a woman to sell herself for immoral purposes is illegal, but for a man to buy her for such purposes is not illegal. A house of prostitution is a common nuisance, but for the man to commit the act that makes it a nuisance is not illegal. Verily the ways of the law are strange, and men's construction of them enough to make angels weep. The malefactors under the Sherman Law make that 'gaseous vertebrate,' the corporation, responsible for their delinquencies, and the debauchee vivifies brick and mortar to sin vicariously that he may evade the penalty of his deed; in relation to which, when he views it legally, his body grows more nebulous than the corporation as a punishable quantity. And men despair of curing the social evil because punishing the woman has not done so! In pity's name what has she, the hunted and despised outcast, left to lose that the man has and values, except her liberty? It might be salutary for him to revive the stocks, place them on Fifth Avenue—say at the corner of Forty-second

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Street, and put the equally guilty pair in it for all who knew them to see. I said equally guilty, but are they? Let us try for a moment to look at it pragmatically, and not dogmatically. Suppose we call it a bit of trade. The man pays so much, in advance, for value to be received: the woman keeps her part of the bargain. For her the constant repetition of these bargains means inevitable disease and premature death. Her average life is from four to seven years. This being the case, it would seem that either great ignorance or great stress must be the primary reason for her taking to this suicidal trade. Our Federal White Slave Commissioner states that his experience goes to show that *ninety per cent.* are the result of seductions. Other experts claim that a large majority are defectives, the congenitally diseased, those victims of heredity who ought never to have been born. Others seem convinced that the primary reason is poverty and low wages: and still others claim that the wanton extravagance of fashionable women, whom the girl of the poorer classes is enormously influenced by and tries to ape, is largely responsible. Without a doubt, all these things constitute the composite reason. In any and all of them, it seems to me, a pitiful lack or need is implied. We know how often the girl has been forced into the life and kept at it in a way so brutal that the civilized world

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has been roused to enact some preventive measures. England has deemed it so barbaric that none but a barbaric punishment could meet the requirements. Parliament has revived the lash for this vilest of civilization's parasites; and *our* courts are, month after month, inflicting one year's imprisonment! *One year!* for keeping a young, helpless girl in this horrible bondage, more atrocious and indefensible than that for which the Civil War was fought. Surely there is not a woman in this room who can fail to pity this wretched girl of the streets. Men prey upon her; men punish her; men kill her: for each man who goes to her drives a nail into her coffin as truly as that, of the two, *he* is the more guilty. *She* directly injures none but him, while he—but here we must recapitulate; go back to the nice young man. To take seriously the plea of his danger from the peril of the streets is impossible. Brought up by a decent mother, with decent sisters, physically and mentally capable—to say that he struggles with an insurmountable necessity is to state what is not true; what any reputable physician, being himself a decent man, will tell you has no physiological foundation in fact. His necessity is merely one of self-control, to be gained through sufficient physical exercise, mental occupation, and abstention from alcoholic excesses. Above all else, it is drink that plays

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the part of the devil's advocate in the man's self-delusion that, naturally, he is any the less able to control himself than is his unmarried sister. Let me tell you that the repression of woman's decent and necessary desire to have children has sent many of them to the insane asylum. So, if there is any truth in the necessity plea, the burden of proof lies in hers, and not in his. In view of these facts, we may state that he goes to, or with, the prostitute of his own free will and upon his own responsibility. If he wants to run the risk for himself of contracting the hydra-headed disease that, in the worst of its forms, means literally rotting to death, any exponent of free will might say that he had the right to do it. But he, as well as you and I, knows that his responsibility is not only to himself—nor only to his wife and children, but to the race. And this greater responsibility is yours perhaps even more than his—to see to it that future generations do not come into the world incapacitated by hereditary disease. When man pleads this spurious necessity of his, that is criminally at variance with yours, ask him how he dares to, in the face of your primal right of maternity to keep your bodies uncontaminated and bear healthy children. The crusades of the middle ages were for a less holy cause. Their objective was a sepulchre; ours is life—women are its natural

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guardians, and man's lust destroys it. His brutality has bred a monster—a Frankenstein, which, in his ignorance and stupidity, he has turned loose to encircle the globe and feed on the blood of the race. And yet, we go on calling it a necessity! Is it because we are mad, or only because we are men? We do not call wife-beating necessary; we have even penalized it. But come to my sanatorium, any day of any week in the year, and tell me if it is in any way comparable in cruelty to the wife maltreatment that produces the mutilations, amputations, and agony that it is our *hourly* necessity to witness there. I once took this method of curing a young man of the necessity delusion, and his cure was so complete that he has since entered the Legislature for the sole purpose of making these injuries to innocent women punishable and preventable. But we don't get on very fast—too few of us are doing it. After years of effort we have only just succeeded in making venereal diseases reportable. The number of cases reported during the first six months was slightly over four thousand. There are said to be thirty thousand prostitutes in this city. If there are, it would be a conservative estimate to say that twenty thousand of them, alone, would come under the head of reportable cases. This is how even the men of my own profession refuse to help. They plead the Hippocratic

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Oath. Sounds well, doesn't it? But from an inside knowledge which you do not possess, let me tell you that it looks so ill that we know it for a form of aphasia common to all cowards. I should like to tell you what an honest and efficient Health Commissioner said of it in a conversation I had with him this past week, but its profanity forbids. I can only tell you that it is as lamentable as it is unpardonable that New York City gives its Board of Health no adequate control over diseases from which the death rate per annum is greater than from tuberculosis. What would you think of a health board that undertook to control the Great White Plague by recognizing its existence in a limited number of women, and segregating them, while the very much larger number of men infected remained at large? This is what might have happened had it been placed in the hands of the Police Department. Perhaps the intelligent administrators who have done this with the greater plague, thought that a first-aid-to-the-injured course was included in the thirty days' tuition that makes a policeman, and considered it adequate to make a health officer of him as well.

"In view of all this wisdom and fair-mindedness displayed by your representatives, it is most difficult to grasp why you are not sufficiently impressed by the majesty of the law,

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compiled by man's mighty brain and enforced by his brawn and muscle, to realize your foolish and unreasonable presumption in thinking that your puny brains and bodies are fit to grapple with matters so entirely beyond your comprehension and strength. And yet, if you had a bill before you approved by one of the first medical organizations in the country, through long years of bowing to the dictation of your mental superiors, you might pass it. Such a bill, aiming to gain for women the protection of a health certificate with the marriage license, has been before our Legislature for three successive years, and been defeated for the third time. Truly, the way in which your fathers, your brothers, and your husbands have carelessly, indifferently, or willfully, neglected your interests in handling this problem, than which, of all problems modern or ancient, none more closely affects you, is damning proof of their inability to represent you—or even legislate for you. Did they call murder a necessity and stop to discuss whether it was eradicable or not, before meting out the punishment of death for it? No; but without having placed a single deterrent in the way of killing their wives in the name of love, if it so pleases them, men tell you that it cannot be stopped. Until we hold property owners to their responsibility, and make commercial fornication a crime re-

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ardless of sex, age, or place, the curability arguments are as puerile and beside the mark as that equally flimsy one for keeping women away from the polls—can you bear it?—the woman's place is the home. Its bromidic note one might endure, but what makes it well-nigh insupportable is the wearisome frequency with which it falls from the lips of the roué and the habitual bridge player and turkey-trotter. One can pick the last by her abbreviated dresses and transparent stockings, the first by his segregation plea, and both by their chronic avoidance of home. The true home spirit breeds the civic spirit. Our home is our country, and its house-keeping should be the business of every able-bodied man and woman in it. Let no word as to its being unwomanly deter you from making it yours. That which those three great, public-spirited, and most womanly of women, Harriet Martineau, Florence Nightingale, and Josephine Butler, thought their business, could not be unworthy of you. It was they who, half a century ago, started the crusade against vice that forced Parliament to repeal the *Contagious Diseases Act*, and aroused most of the other countries of Europe to wage war upon regulation. Disfranchised, or enfranchised, the best of woman's work will be what it has always been:—to tend, to comfort, and to succor the unfortunate and the afflicted. But into the modern woman's

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work has crept that greater concept of prevention. And above all else, it is prevention that we need here; prevention armed with publicity. Let us hear no more of the silence monger; the most hypocritical of the evaders—he who turns away and says: ‘I’d rather not talk about it, it’s so unpleasant.’ Yes, by heaven, it is! So loathsome is it, and such a blot upon our manhood, that I sometimes think that we should talk of nothing else until every decent man in the country has been goaded into wiping it from the record of his existing and indefensible crimes. If men will not refuse to elect and appoint legislators and city officials who tolerate white slavery and public prostitution, then, if for no other reason, *you women must* win the ballot to be able to make that refusal. What the majority, holding the reins of government, wants, it generally manages to get. Congress wants battleships and public buildings for Oshkosh and Kalamazoo, or any other places equally remote, and appropriates millions every year for their construction; but when our billion-dollar government was asked for the paltry sum of two hundred thousand dollars to make war upon the white slave driver, seventy-five thousand was all that could be got. After this, it is hardly necessary for me to tell you that had men wanted to stop this infamous exploitation, they would have done it long since.

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It goes on because they want it to go on, and so long as we have a unisexual government, it will continue to go on—notwithstanding the devastation that strews its wake, nor that it is in direct opposition to five out of six of the reasons for which the first paragraph of the Constitution of the United States affirms that it was created:—‘to establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.’ Go back to your homes, women, ponder these words of the great, far-seeing patriots who drew that Constitution, and then think of the thousands of your enslaved and suffering sisters, of the blind, deformed, and imbecile children, calling to you for help. If, after this, you will not come forth again to fight for them and save others from their torture, you range yourselves on the side of the men who inflict them by countenancing a government that permits them.”

With a few words to the chairman, in passing, John walked rapidly to the nearest exit, refusing any acknowledgment of the vociferous clapping of many white-gloved hands.

“Isn’t he splendid?” said a woman sitting next to Claire. “If all men were like him we shouldn’t need the vote.”



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Her heart too full for utterance, even for a civil reply to her effervescent neighbor, Claire also took her departure; and reached the street as John's car was moving away from the door. His eyes were scanning a note-book, and, fortunately for them both, were not raised to meet the adoration of her look.

XXXIII

CLAIRE sat at the piano struggling with a difficult phrase, over which she had been working for more than an hour, when, to her surprise, the door opened and in walked Marian.

"Dead?" asked Claire, holding down a troublesome chord.

"Do I look like a ghost?" smiled Marian.

"Goose! I mean your patient, of course."

"She never was even ill enough to be in bed. I told her so this morning, and at dinner-time my successor arrived. Ergo, here be I."

Taking off her hat, Marian threw herself down among the cushions beside the open window, through which the night wind blew strongly.

"Oh, isn't that breeze good! It feels more like August than April."

"To-morrow it will feel more like influenza if you tempt providence like that," said Claire, as she threw a rug over her cousin and drew a chair out of the draught for herself. "I'm so glad you came. I never can work to any advantage when the weather's like this. I've been mangling that sonata until I was just beginning

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to wish that Schumann had never been born. Feel that way about your patient, too? ”

“ Let me forget her—and all of her kind. I’m thankful to say I don’t run across them often.”

“ I’d give them a pill,” said Claire, grimly.

“ They’ll all cease from troubling for a while. I’m going to take a rest—Mabel’s sailing next week.”

“ So that’s how you’re going to rest! ”

“ That’s play, my dear, compared with nursing.”

“ Why this sudden flight? Blond Beast flown ahead? ”

“ No; he left for California last week, thank heaven! Alfred has been negotiating for a house in London for Mabel for some time, and has finally succeeded in getting one that suits her.”

“ She looks much more as if she needed a rest cure than a London season. Isn’t it about time for her to have got over her operation? ”

“ She may never get over it,” said Marian, sadly. “ I mean, be strong as she once was; and I’m afraid that she’s beginning to realize it. That’s why she craves excitement so. Whatever her faults may be, she has pluck.”

“ Yes, she has,” admitted Claire; “ and it’s pretty hard to lose your health like that. Is Alfred sailing with her? ”

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"No; but she asked him to, and seemed really disappointed when he told her that he couldn't possibly leave before June. He'll join her then. It's pretty fine of him, don't you think, to stick to his guns like this? He's winning her respect, at least—and perhaps something more."

"Yes, it is fine; and it's the first time I've known of a man, in love with his wife, who put other women's needs ahead of her whims—because London is a whim."

"Now come, Claire! men aren't so bad as that."

"Yes, they are—most of them, else they wouldn't have made marriage at all. What do you suppose they did it for except to enslave woman?—to make and keep her his thing? Did you see the death notice in the paper this morning, referring to a woman as the relict of her deceased husband? Relict:—that which is left after the loss or decay of the rest. Man's the rest, and we're what's left."

"Dear me! why get wrought up over a mere term of speech?—and one that's practically obsolete."

"It isn't, or it wouldn't have been in to-day's paper. And it shows what woman's status has been for so long—and what most men still want to keep it. They want her in subjection; and they'll be able to keep her there, too, so long as young people are fed on mawkish love stories

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and nasty, erotic plays. It's part of the conspiracy to teach girls to believe that marriage is the gateway to happiness, and the only one; and to foster the conception of a beautiful, altogether impossible divinity in boys, instead of teaching them to look for intelligence and character. The idea that your heart's desire is the fit person to be the mother or father of your children, just because you happen to love that person; or that you must be able to call that person 'mine' just because you love him—or her—it's archaic! "

" Natural though."

" Yes, like a good many other stupid and pernicious customs, that continue to exist because we can't tolerate the idea of not getting what we want. Marriage, as it exists to-day, is a farce. Free love is anathema; but anyone who has ample means for traveling may practice it with perfect respectability. It goes by the name of divorce, that's all. And yet, a man may do what Alfred has done to Mabel, and *she* can't divorce him for it. On the other hand, an intellectual, superbly healthy man and woman, who loved each other, might live together and produce beautiful, clever children; but that would be a heinous sin."

" You've got to have *some* protection for the woman—if only to prevent desertion," Marian protested.

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“ From what I’ve seen in the Domestic Relations’ Court—I’ve been there four times this month—I should say that the marriage contract didn’t prevent it.”

“ At least it is this much of a preventive—that, things being as they now are, if an honorable man wants to live with a woman, he asks her to marry him; and no man would ask a woman to brave social custom to the extent of living with him, unmarried, if he really loved her.”

“ I think you’ve said that before,” said Claire, dryly; “ and I think, too, that I’ve generally agreed. Of course there must be some contract. What I’m trying to get at is, that the important thing is the production of healthy children; and that it’s far more ethical to produce them outside of marriage than unhealthy ones in it. It’s a cold, scientific problem; and so long as we go on treating it sentimentally, marriage will continue to be a farce—and an unethical one at that. It’s really the woman, and not the man, who should do the selecting. It’s her natural right: the children are hers—and they ought to bear her name, too. Custom and legal issues aside, why, when a woman takes a man for the father of her children, should she change her name to his, any more than that he should change his name to hers? ”

“ So that she may be known as his woman

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and what's 'left over from the rest' when he's dead," laughed Marian. "I grant you that it does look a bit partial when you look at it impartially."

"But you can't make men see it."

"Poor dears, they've had the upper hand for so long, you can't expect them to give it up without a struggle."

"They're so natural," sneered Claire.

"And women are so artificial," replied Marian.

"True, O Queen!

'The time is out of joint;—O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right.'

It would be a grind, too, if it weren't so vitally interesting. Which reminds me—I got a job for my last probationer to-day."

"And have you signed the contract with the Boston Symphony?"

"No, but I've about decided to."

"And how's the new pupil coming along?"

"My dear, she's a perfect marvel! I had her play for Mrs. Fanshawe; and bless her heart! she's promised me seventy-five dollars a month for her to live on, and to send her to Vienna, too, if I want her to go."

Marian looked into Claire's glowing face, and smiled happily.

"What are you grinning at?" asked Claire, a little resentfully.

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"Just for the pleasure of seeing you like this—happy at last;—for you can't deny that you are."

"Perhaps I might, if I sat down and hunted reasons for not being. Of course there are the times when things seem all askew—and other times when one feels lonely. Spring has uncomfortable possibilities that way. Makes one long for—the stars."

"Are you sure that it isn't a man?"

"No."

"But you won't send for him, and tell him so?"

"No. . . . The times that I want him most are the very times that I mustn't see him. Could I be less considerate of him than he is of me?—I'm not sure that it isn't his nobility that keeps me true to myself—and to him."

"If you should ask me, I should say that it was being very unfair to him: and I believe the real reason why you won't marry John Rathbone is because that cad of a Dick Wall has succeeded in making you afraid to marry anybody."

"Please don't, Marian. It distresses me to hear you say that I am unfair to John. He's too big, and his life is too full, for him to be unhappy because he can't have me for his wife. Neither of us has the right to be unhappy—he says it himself. How many have all that we



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have—health, work, success, and our wonderful friendship? We know that it is far above the fatuous or spoiled thing that the love of most men and women is. No selfishness nor sensuality mars it; it will never die of satiety, nor breed contempt through familiarity. It is on the highest plane of the strongest and best that is in us both—the sweeter and more inspiring for the forbearance and renunciation. It is such love as this, Marian, that makes great men and women—and makes them do great work.”

“Perhaps,” answered Marian, softly; “because it is of such stuff that great work is made.”

THE END

